

2013 Golden Jubilee edition

BIHAR YOGA®

Bhakti Yoga Sagar

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



V O L U M E T W O

Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

Bhakti Yoga Sagar

VOLUME TWO

BIHAR SCHOOL OF YOGA



1963–2013
GOLDEN JUBILEE

WORLD YOGA CONVENTION 2013

GANGA DARSHAN, MUNGER, BIHAR, INDIA

23rd–27th October 2013

Bhakti Yoga Sagar

(Ocean of the Yoga of Devotion)

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

*Satsangs at Sri Panch Dashnam Paramahansa Alakh
Bara, Rikhia, Deoghar, during the month of Darshan,
from 18 November to 17 December 1994*

VOLUME TWO



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

© Sivananda Math 1996

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted or stored in a retrieval system, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from Yoga Publications Trust.

The terms Satyananda Yoga® and Bihar Yoga® are registered trademarks owned by International Yoga Fellowship Movement (IYFM). The use of the same in this book is with permission and should not in any way be taken as affecting the validity of the marks.

Published by Sivananda Math
First edition 1996

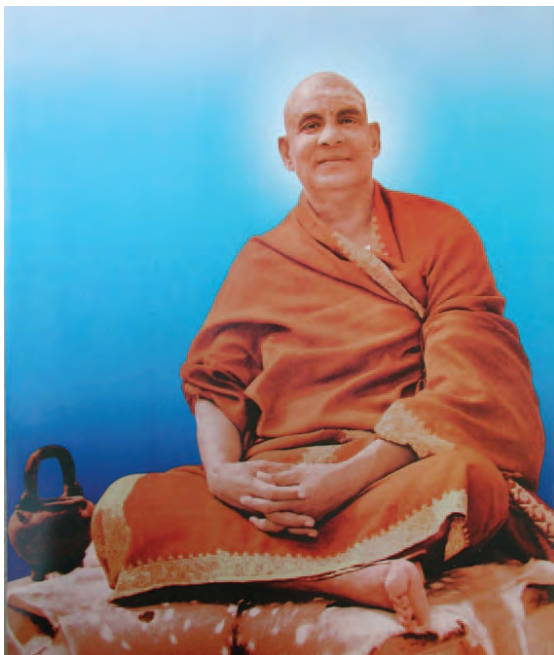
Published by Yoga Publications Trust
Reprinted 2001 (with corrections), 2013

ISBN: 978-81-86336-20-5

Publisher and distributor: Yoga Publications Trust, Ganga Darshan,
Munger, Bihar, India.

Website: www.biharyoga.net
www.rikhiapeeth.net

Printed at Thomson Press (India) Limited, New Delhi, 110001



Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*

Contents

Foreword	<i>ix</i>
Satsangs	
Twenty-one	1
Twenty-two	17
Twenty-three	41
Twenty-four	79
Twenty-five	99
Twenty-six	135
Twenty-seven	152
Twenty-eight	167
Twenty-nine	196
Thirty	234
Thirty-one	245
Thirty-two	265
Thirty-three	286
Thirty-four	324
Thirty-five	350
Thirty-six	368
Thirty-seven	377
Thirty-eight	410
Glossary	427
Index	447

Foreword

In 1994, during the auspicious month of Marga Sheersha from 18th November to 17th December, darshan was given by Sri Swamiji at the Sri Panchdashnam Paramahansa Alakh Bara in Rikhia, Deoghar District. During this month the ocean of bhakti yoga swelled over the crowds that had gathered for this occasion from all corners of India and the world. Multitudes of devotees, disciples and admirers poured in like a river making its way towards the sea, during this period when Sri Swamiji had consented to give darshan for the first time in over five years.

During this darshan, the treasure of seven decades of spiritual experience began to flow from Sri Swamiji like a stream of compassion, and it became difficult to bind this flow in words. However, the first collection of satsangs from the 1994 darshan was published on the occasion of the Sat Chandi Maha Yajna in November 1995 under the title *Bhakti Yoga Sagar, Volume One*.

Since discovering that his relationship with God is one of master and servant, Sri Swamiji has faithfully followed the orders of his master with complete devotion and dedication. Obedience and service to the Lord in the form of the master and servant relationship have become his way of life, and in 1992, he received the following mandate from the Lord.

*Love thy neighbours,
Provide them with the same facilities
As I have provided for you.*

Today, in this age of modern technology and communication, the world has become so small that the entire planet can be considered as one neighbourhood and all of humanity as one family.

*This is mine, that is yours,
So think the people with a narrow vision,
But those who view life with a broad outlook,
See the entire world as their family.*

At present, the nearest neighbours of Sri Swamiji are the poor, downtrodden and pure-hearted villagers, who consider him as their God. However, he considers himself to be a servant of God, because in the *Ramacharitamanas* the Lord Himself has said:

*Again and again I tell you the truth,
Nobody is more dear to me than my servant.*

Sri Swamiji says that this was the century of science and industrialization and the coming century shall be one of *bhakti*, devotion. Just as the scientists of the twentieth century conducted research into the field of matter, in the next century the scientists will conduct research on *bhakti*, emotions and love. Therefore, Sri Swamiji says it is necessary for each individual to find his relationship with God. In the *Srimad Bhagavata* the same idea is also expressed:

*The most important association in life
Is one's relationship with God.
This relationship may be one of love,
Affection, friendship, fear or enmity.
Whatever feeling prevails in this divine relationship,
The mental and emotional energies*

*Will be constantly directed towards God.
This relationship will transform the individual,
Lifting him into the dimension of spiritual experience,
And, ultimately merging his soul with God.*

Similarly, in the *Narada Bhakti Sutras* it is said:

*In this worldly ocean,
Which is full of infinite sensuality,
Whosoever merges himself with God,
Purifies his entire lineage.
The mother of such a godly soul
Experiences perfect contentment,
And the earth on which he walks
Become full of auspiciousness.*

In this spirit of devotion, on the occasion of the Ram Naam Aradhana, from 26th November to 24th December 1996, we offer the remaining portion of the satsangs with Sri Swamiji during the 1994 darshan in the form of *Bhakti Yoga Sagar, Volume Two*. We dedicate this volume to Him by whose grace the compilation and presentation has been made possible.

*O Lord Govinda,
We offer the things to you
Which already belong to you.*

Namo Narayana

Satsang 21

30 November 1994, Morning

I do not deal with yoga any more; I have forgotten it. That was the last chapter of my life. The new chapter is bhakti. Now I only talk about how to do japa, how to remember God and how to love Him. Bhakti is your relationship with the Lord. Just as you have a relationship with your mother, father, wife or husband, in the same way you also have a relationship with God. What is this relationship? You have to discover it for yourself by realizing your relationship with Him. Who is He to you? Who are you to Him? What do you consider Him to be? This is bhakti. In the *Ramacharitamanas* it says:

*O Master of the Raghu family
I have no other desire in my heart,
I speak to Thee, O soul of the whole universe,
O excellent soul of the Raghu family,
Bestow on me Thy bhakti,
That I may depend on Thee alone,
And free my mind from the malady of desire.*

Please tell us about the mischief Swami Niranjan used to get up to when he was small.

I think his gurubhais would be better able to tell you about it. I only know that, as a child, when Swami Niranjan slept, you could remove his bed and take him anywhere, and he would

not know. He slept like a log! When he was asleep, the swamis would take him off his bed and carry him from one side of the ashram to the other. They were very mischievous, but not in front of me. I knew all about it, but I never considered this childish mischief to be something very negative.

I think it is necessary for children to be mischievous. If they are not allowed to be mischievous and are suppressed or restricted, they will become bad later and their parents will not be able to control them. When children are naughty in a small flat, it is very difficult for their parents to handle them due to restricted space, but if there is a property like we have here, who cares? Let the children run five times from one end of the boundary to the other, then they will be tired and sleep well. But for children brought up in flats it is more difficult. Therefore, the entire culture of people living in flats is different from the culture which you see here. Here children can play, make mischief and exhaust all their energy, then they sleep well. That kind of mischief is *bal lila*, child's play.

Children have an excess of energy. Therefore, they should run, play and enjoy a lot of sport. It is not good for them to simply sit and study alone. Their energy has to be balanced. Parents have a very bad habit of nagging their children, saying, "You are not studying. Have you done your homework?" Children are never asked, "Why don't you go and play football?" Parents never tell them, "There is a good movie showing today. Take some money and go and see it." In India, when children want to see movies, their parents agree reluctantly. They think their children have the same level of consciousness as they do.

The levels of consciousness of a father and his six-year-old son are entirely different. When the son says, "I want to see a movie," there is a different idea in his mind to when the father who is twenty-eight or thirty wants to see a movie. Their attitude and awareness are different. Children do not have an impure motivation; their level of awareness is very high. Children are very close to God. This is not a

stereotyped phrase; it is true that children are pure. The moment we grow up, the distance between God and us widens. We learn a lot of wickedness. This state of innocence is described in the first part of the *Ramacharitamanas*, in which the childhood of Rama is described:

*While taking food, when the King calls Rama
He does not leave the company of his friends.
When Kaushalya goes to call him,
The Lord struts and runs far away.
The mother runs to catch hold of Him by force,
He, who is not conceivable even by the holy scriptures
Which say that He is unknowable.
Even Lord Shiva is unable to know Him.
At last, when He comes in covered with dust,
The king takes Him in his lap.
Smiling, He takes his food in a hurried manner;
And whenever He finds opportunity,
Runs away with a joyful shout,
His face smeared with curd and rice.*

So, children must play and arrangements must be made for this. In my opinion, games or sports should become a subject at school and children should even be given marks for their performance. Games should be compulsory for all children except those who have physical problems. Games, drama and music competitions should go on side by side with intellectual pursuits. What is the use of teaching your child that Akbar was born in 1615 and Aurangzeb in 1750? Who wants to know all this history? I learned so much history, but it is of no use to me. When children have time and want to read then let them, but do not impose study as a part of their education.

Children do not become great through study or qualifications. They become great through the quality of their mind, intelligence and receptivity. This is based upon how much they are able to receive, retain and give. After all, what were Newton's qualifications? Was he a university graduate?

I don't mean that one should not study. One must have qualifications because today this is the system throughout the world and we must respect it. But when children are continually asked, "Have you done your homework?" they become scared of not getting first class marks in their exams. They worry about what Papa or Mama will say, because if they fail they know they will have to face the music.

School children are always afraid that they might fail in their exams. What does it matter if they fail? Parents should tell their children, "Never mind, if you fail you can try again." But parents do not have the courage to say such things, so their children think, "Other students are fighting for a first division. If I get a second division, what will Daddy say?" This idea, which is drilled into the minds of children, ruins their entire personality. Instead, the child should be told, "Go and study if you like, but do not bother too much about it. You will not get a job by doing your BA anyway. It is more important that you play every morning and evening. I am just sending you to school. It does not matter if you pass or fail."

The popular notion is that if children play and have fun, they will fail in their studies and in life. But I say that if they play and have fun, they will be successful, and if they study too much, they will spoil their lives. Playing balances the muscular and nervous energies of children and it circulates blood throughout the system many times over. You should feed your children a rich diet with milk, butter and eggs if you can afford it, and then ask them to run two miles every day. The child who does not run and play sits in front of the TV all day or studies with one leg up on the table. His blood circulation becomes very sluggish, like a choked drain. His studies suffer and a tutor has to be called in to help him.

If a tutor has to be called to help the child study, it is better that the child is not taught at all! If a mirror is clean, your reflection will be clearly visible, but if you are not able to see your reflection, of what use is the mirror? The power of children to grasp new things is normally so strong that the

teacher needs to teach something to them only once. Children listen to a song from the cinema just once and they are able to memorize it, yet they need a tutor to help them learn from the school books. No! Children should be left free to play. I grieve to see what is being done to children these days.

What about girls? Shouldn't they also be encouraged to play and exercise more than they do?

A sub-standard machine can only produce a sub-standard product. Just look at me: I am five foot two inches tall. If my mother had been well built, I would have been a sturdy six footer! To make good quality products, you need good quality machines. For this reason, girls should play for they will bear the children of the next generation. There are many games like skipping which provide very good exercise. There are a few games which are not meant for girls, but they should certainly join in games and sports, keeping in mind their physical nature.

Everyone knows that a female gives birth to another human being which grows and derives nourishment inside her body. Whatever the mother's internal condition may be, whether nectar or poison, this will directly affect the child. He will inherit her weaknesses and diseases as well as her strengths and intellect. In science this is called genetic transfer. We are the genetic transfer of our parents. Therefore, females should exercise at all ages of their life. Asanas have their own importance, but women should also go for walks and outings. Social restrictions on females, such as staying indoors behind curtained windows and not appearing before men, no longer apply in modern society. Now that society has permitted women so much freedom, they should use it for their benefit. The people of Punjab, Lahore, Amritsar and Peshawar are in the habit of going out for walks in the morning and evening along with their wives and children. At the end of their daily walk they stop at a shop and have a big glass of lassi, which is delicious as well as energizing.

You can maintain this Punjabi habit in Bihar also. It is a very healthy tradition and you should continue it, wherever you are. Even if you are not able to walk in the morning, it is very good to take a walk in the evening. You may have engagements in the morning at the office or the shop, so fix a time in the evening for walking before or after dinner and then go for a walk. Take your wife and children along with you. Make it a long walk, perhaps a mile, and when you come home, bathe and go to sleep. This is better than sitting in front of the idiot box and staring at it, even though you understand nothing of what you are watching. That is why we call it the idiot box, because it does nothing for you.

I am not denouncing television totally. You can watch the news from time to time. I am talking about the misuse of television, which can damage your health and that of your children. After all, if your children fall sick, you are responsible. You can't just blame it all on the food, the atmosphere or some virus. The main culprit is you and the habits which the children imbibe from you. If the children have inherited your nose and eyes, they can also inherit your illnesses. This is pure logic!

Could you speak to us about God?

It is easier to think about God than to talk about Him. God cannot be explained, He can only be experienced. Sometimes, however, it is inspiring to hear about Him. It gives you courage and strength to face life squarely. But whatever you think about God becomes relevant only when you have established a relationship with Him. What is your relationship with God? That is what you have to discover. My relationship with God cannot be the same as yours because my relationship is purely personal, as yours should also be. The first step in the life of a bhakta or devotee is to find out how you are related to God. To discover your relationship with God takes time, but once you have discovered it, your journey will be nearly complete for then

you will be very close to Him. It has been said in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

*Just as with each morsel of food
We receive the trio:
Satisfaction, nourishment and appeasement,
Similarly, by surrendering to God
And developing Bhakti towards Him,
We receive the trio:
Divine love, experience and non-attachment,
All together.*

Can you show me the way to remove fear from my mind?

Why don't you ask your teacher? When your mind loves God, thinks of Him and lives in Him, then where is the maya? If you put the light on in your room at night, you don't care if there is darkness outside because there is light in the room. In the same way, if your mind is filled with God, bhakti, surrender and devotion, there is no maya. When you switch the light on, there is no darkness. That is the law. So, it has been said in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

*If you desire to illumine
The inner and outer dimensions,
Keep the radiant jewel of the name of Rama
Ever between the tongue and throat.*

What is the importance of sacrifice on the spiritual path and in the context of the guru-disciple relationship? What sacrifice is the disciple required to make to the guru, and what sacrifice does the guru make for the disciple on the physical, mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual levels?

The relationship between husband and wife is considered to be very close, but the relationship between guru and disciple is even closer. The difference is that the guru-disciple relationship relates to the spirit, whereas the relationship between husband and wife relates to the body and emotions.

Therefore, when the question of sacrifice arises, the spirit is represented by the goat which is sacrificed at the altar. I am using the word 'goat' as it is given in the Upanishads. In Sanskrit the word is *aja*, which means 'goat', but it also means 'one who is unborn' or 'one who is never born'. Spirit is never born. So *aja* has two meanings: one is 'goat' and the other is 'one who is unborn'.

That spirit which is unborn is what has to be sacrificed. However, we have to know the spirit so that we can sacrifice it. We know the body and how to sacrifice it, we also know the emotions and how to sacrifice them, but we have never seen or experienced the spirit, so how can we sacrifice it? First of all, the disciple has to realize the form and nature of his spirit; only then can he think of sacrificing it. Sacrificing your body, mind and emotions is not enough, you have to sacrifice the spirit. In sacrifice, the spirit is represented by the goat. The Jews sacrifice the goat or lamb at Passover. It has the same spiritual significance although they may not realize it. Muslims also have the ceremony of *kurbani*, the sacrifice of the goat. Here 'goat' refers to the spirit, not to the goat itself.

This topic should be dealt with more fully, but in order to explain it in detail I would have to give my own example based on how I lived in Rishikesh; what I thought about at that time; what my attitude was towards work, myself and my guru; how I assisted him, and what my evaluation of him was in relation to myself. But that is a very long story.

Are there martial arts in India?

Many ancient forms of martial arts are still found in Kerala, but they do not call them by that name. If you go to the north eastern state of Manipur, you will also find those arts which use only the body or the hands for self-defence. Sometimes sticks, daggers and axes are also used. Although these systems of defence called martial arts have existed in India since ancient times, they were not promoted, even in Kerala. This was not because we did not want to utilize them, but because we thought they would create more problems

than they could solve. Martial arts are taught for self-defence, but there is always the fear that they will be misused to create trouble for people.

There are many disciples who have been initiated by you. How can they best work with Swami Niranjan and his disciples in unity and in continuity?

Now I have completely lost touch with the wisdom of administration. I don't even know what administration is any more. For me, the most important thing is devotion to God. If one has that, then everything else becomes easy. Everyone can interact together in harmony when they relate to God and not to each other. But people think they have to relate to each other. Electricity flows from the powerhouse through the substation and then to individual homes. Each home is ultimately connected to the powerhouse, but in between there is a transformer or substation which steps down the voltage from 11,000 volts to 400 volts. So, the power originates from the main powerhouse or generating station. From there it is sent to the substation where it is transformed to a lower voltage so that finally it can reach your main switchboard. Ultimately, it is all the same electricity. The only difference is in the individual's understanding.

These problems arise when the ego operates. When you go on an ego trip you should have an egodectomy, just like you have a tonsilectomy or a hysterectomy. If you know that your mind, your aspirations and everything in your life is illumined with divine light, effulgence and divine realization, then everything goes smoothly. But when the purpose of somebody's interaction with you or me on a personal basis is motivated, not by devotion or bhakti but by ego, then there is always a difference. So many minds pulling in different directions will blow a fuse. It has been rightly said in the *Yoga Vasishtha*:

*Ego is the source of all calamities, anxieties and desires.
So there is no enemy stronger than ego.*

In any ashram, institution or organization in the world, minds blow fuses. It does not matter whether it is national, local, or even a mini ashram consisting of husband, wife and children. Either the bulb goes or the fuse blows.

Let us start with the family structure. In the family there is total dictatorship, not socialism or democracy. Nowadays young children are opposing their parents and fighting for their rights because they find this dictatorship oppressive. Parents are obsessed with their children and youngsters misunderstand their elders. The heads of families who are in power should have a more democratic outlook. They should be more humble and friendly and should not behave like bosses or bullies. The entire family structure should be based on equality.

Children are genetically and psychologically equal to their parents. The parents love their child because they feel that he is very close to them. On the one hand, parents express their closeness to the child but, on the other hand, they bully him and order him about as if he were a servant. Where is the love? When the guru, father or leader says something and everyone who is subordinate has to accept it, that is dictatorship. When there is love there is no bullying. Love is equality not dictatorship.

The basic thing which is lacking in most people today is a spiritual aim. Your spiritual aims are not well defined. What is your spiritual aim? Suppose you want to discover your relationship with God. In order to do that, first you would need to consult books, sadhus, mahatmas, saints and learned people. Then you would practise meditation in order to make your mind sharp and subtle, so that you could discover your relationship with God. Either you have a proper spiritual aim which you identify yourself with, or you call yourself a disciple of Swami Satyananda and Swami Sivamurti your *gurubhai*, your fellow disciple. What difference does it make who is the guru and who the *gurubhai*? We are all the same.

Secondly, you must remember that when you use the word 'organization', you are talking about a number of

organs which work together to support a particular structure or aim. This body is an organization. The eyes can see but the mouth cannot; the nose can smell but the ears cannot; the feet can run but the hands cannot. Every organ and part of the body has a distinct role to play. What happens when the different parts of the body begin to feel jealous of each other, the eyes feeling jealous of the nose, the nose of the ears? We lose our sense of harmony and well-being. We cannot function efficiently or we may fall ill. This is what is happening in our organizations.

Somebody may be a good manager, somebody else a good singer, writer, speaker or think tank. It is natural for the think tank to go on ego trips and he will not think well if he doesn't. At the same time, those who are not such good thinkers will feel jealous. Everybody goes into ecstasy when they listen to a person who can sing well. This boosts his or her ego and others who cannot sing so well feel jealous. So these are the shortcomings which are part and parcel of the human personality. Where there is authority or accomplishment, there will be ego or pride, and others will become jealous.

Only those who are very cautious and alert can be exceptions to this rule. Even though one tries to be careful, the virus gets in somewhere. This cannot be avoided because the virus of pride is a natural component of genius. There are very few people in our society who have had power without the intoxication that comes with it. You find them sometimes, you sniff them out in some corner or other through their speech, thinking, actions, reactions and in other ways. Administrators must always be aware of this. In the *Ramacharitamanas* it says:

*Breathes there a man on this earth
Who does not suffer from the delusion of the gunas?
Who is free from the bondage of ego and pride?
Who is not intoxicated by the fever of youth?
Whose fame is not debased
By the feeling of 'I and mine'?*

*Whom envy has left untainted?
Who remains unmoved by the gales of sorrow?
Whom the serpent of anxiety does not bite?
Who is free from the clutches of Maya?
Whom the worm of desire does not devour,
Valiant though he may certainly be?
Whose mind is not eclipsed by desire
For wealth, power, name and fame?*

When I was living in Munger there were many people involved in the administration. I used to bear with everyone. Sometimes one would ask, "Why does he behave like that?" I would say, "He behaves like that because it is natural for him to do so. When the sun rises, not only the light moves, but the shadow also follows it. Why does the shadow follow the light? It follows, that's all. He is a capable person, so he has that shadow." Therefore, the capable people in administration should be tolerated and given due recognition. For that reason, I behaved with all the swamis as if they were my friends. Even if I had to come down to their level of behaviour, I did it. I did not treat them as if they were my juniors or my children.

The main aim is to get the work done, so the administrator must have a greater ability than those who are being administered. The blame for organizational problems does not lie with the workers, it lies with the administrator. A capable administrator must have certain abilities, especially the ability to make decisions based on the experience of trial and error in life. I have had three great experiences in my life. One was the twelve years which I spent with my guru, Swami Sivananda. That was a period of rich experience, both spiritual and temporal, experience in all kinds of things like writing, translating and printing. It was also a very useful experience for dealing with anger and developing tolerance.

I also had many experiences before that in my home where I had to manage two thousand acres of land, five hundred sheep, ten dogs, twenty ponies and many

servants. I must have lost a lot of money! I used to kick the servants and abuse them, but ultimately I realized that every one has his own self-respect. When I was able to recognize and respect this quality in each individual, then I could take everyone into my confidence and get their maximum contribution, whether in the form of work or anything else required. In the *Ramacharitamanas*, Sri Rama exemplifies this form of respect when he says to Sumanta, his minister:

*You are like my father and a great benefactor;
I request you with folded hands.*

Sita also says to him:

*You are my benefactor, like my father and father-in-law,
If I give a reply, it will be highly improper.*

When Hanuman returned with information about the whereabouts of Sita, Sri Rama said to him:

*Listen, my son,
I will never be free from my obligation to you.
I have given this due thought and I confirm it.*

All these are examples of communication skills. I do not believe that there is any difference between myself and the other disciples of Swami Sivananda. In a way, Swami Poonyananda is also my gurubhai because his guru, Swami Maheshananda Giri, is my *vidya guru*. I have five gurus. Swami Sivananda is my *diksha guru*; he gave me sannyasa and also my spiritual name. Then there was Swami Maheshananda Giri, my *vidya guru*, who was chief of the Niranjani Akhara, which Swami Poonyananda is the chief of now. In the early days when I went to Rishikesh, he was the chief of Kailash Ashram, near Rishikesh, where our organization is registered at present.

Some swamis think, "This guru or this gurubhai is very junior to me," but I do not think that way. I regard all the gurus and gurubhais as senior in every way. I cannot

say that he commands my respect, so he is my gurubhai. Swami Chidananda is my gurubhai and we were together from the early days of the Divine Life Society. But now I cannot consider him as my gurubhai because he sits where my guru used to sit and, therefore, he is equal to my guru. The tradition demands that I offer him due reverence and worship him with devotion. Similarly, Swami Niranjana now sits where I sat and my disciples must accept that with the right attitude. They are offering their respect, not to Swami Niranjana, but to the seat where a man whom they respect once sat. If those disciples cannot understand this, their brains are drained!

There is no comparison between myself and Swami Chidananda. Many years ago I said to him, "Swami Chidanandaji, I may run faster, speak faster, sing longer and make decisions faster than you can, but you are Swami Sivanandaji's chief disciple. Therefore, I touch your feet because you sit on the same seat my guru sat on. You represent him in the flesh, since he is no longer living in this world." This is the attitude of a man who has respect. Should I be jealous of him? No, he is my gurubhai. I knew him very well. Sometimes he would say to me, "Swamiji, Mr. So and So is coming. Give him proper attention." I would reply, "It is not your duty to tell me what I should do; it is my duty to tell you what you should do." But then the situation changed and I had to accept that and respect him as I respected my guru.

According to Indian tradition, there are certain manners or protocol to be observed for each and everybody, especially for elders, which the modern person, particularly in the West, does not know. That protocol between youngsters and elders is still observed in India, but in the West it is completely disregarded. If the proper protocol exists between youngster and elder, daughter and parent, disciple and guru, there will be less tension, fewer quarrels, misunderstandings and disastrous relationships. While I was in Munger, the sannyasins often used to abuse me behind

my back, but I never showed them that I knew it. Their behaviour was not befitting a swami or a disciple, but I didn't bother about it because I never wanted to be the loser just for the sake of my ego. If somebody criticizes me behind my back, let him do it. I know who I am, so why should I be affected by such comments?

Now, of course, I want to be away from everybody. I do not need this guru-disciple relationship anymore; it is an unnecessary attribute of my personality. I am just Swami Satyananda, a disciple of Swami Sivananda, struggling on my spiritual path. Swami Sivananda had endurance like a mountain and his forgiveness can only be compared to that of Mother Earth. Mother Earth forgives you for all the mistakes you make on her bosom, enjoying and destroying her at the same time. Just as she is totally forgiving, so Swami Sivananda was full of forgiveness too. He was also very alert. From his kutir he would call, "Satyananda, Mr Jambar has come. See if he has eaten." I would say, "Swamiji, he has eaten, but he is not vegetarian so he just took half a piece of bread." He would say, "Why don't you go and get him some meat?" So of course I had to do it.

Swami Sivananda always told me never to hurt another's feelings. He himself practised this throughout his life. I have met many sadhus, mahatmas and saints. I haven't seen Ramakrishna or Vivekananda, but I've seen Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi, Swami Ramdas, Swami Nityananda of Vajreshwari, Dhuniwale Dada of Karwa, Maharshi Mahesh Yogi and Acharya Rajneesh. However, the person who has had the greatest influence in my life was Swami Sivananda. He convinced me, not because he was my guru, but because he was a man who lived in accordance with the laws of divinity.

If you cannot live in accordance with the laws of God and the Divine, then you are inviting problems in life. Somebody will be angry with you, someone else will hate you. After all, if you have five thousand acquaintances, how can you say that none of them hate you? There will be a thousand who hate you. And if you know all the time that these people hate

you, what will happen to your psyche, to your personality, to your self-esteem? You will become a sick man. Life has to be lived in accordance with the laws of dharma. Dharma is not religion in the sense that we generally understand it. Religion should relate to humanity through God. Therefore, it is that kind of expression or behaviour which is related with humanity, with the people around you, but always through God. Dharma is not just ethics or morality, it is true religion.

I took initiation from you in 1983. What is my dharma and how can I fulfil it?

When you go back to Munger you should put this question to Swami Niranjan. I am retired. You must remember one thing; I have not called you here to give you guidance. Whatever I am talking to you about is just entertainment. I am no longer a teacher, no longer a guru. That duty has been handed over to Swami Niranjan, both officially and spiritually. Therefore, stay calm and peaceful while you are here and when you go to Munger, just tap on Swami Niranjan's door.

Satsang 22

30 November 1994, Afternoon

We have come here for your blessings.

Blessings are given by God; man can only give good wishes. God's blessings do not require a medium. You must have read somewhere that the guru can give you God's blessings. Some gurus do that sometimes to boost their importance. God does not need any brokers in between to transfer His blessings. Nevertheless you should go to the satsang of sadhus and mahatmas to seek knowledge, to learn something. It has been said in the *Yoga Vasishtha*:

*The company of great souls
Is beneficial at all times.
Satsang with learned persons
Turns adversity into fortune.*

India has many sadhus and mahatmas who do not marry. They have no family or property of their own, but as far as karma is concerned, their responsibilities are no less than that of the householder. In terms of family management, there are three to four children in a family on average. The ashrams or spiritual families of these sadhus often consist of fifty, one hundred or two hundred members, sometimes even more. The sadhu has to arrange for their food and many other needs. In Munger, and even here, someone invariably gets dysentery or gastroenteritis or some other kind of

disorder, and we have to take care of them. But you should learn from the ways in which we manage this. We look after them, not out of attachment or personal love, but because there is a divine link between us.

If something happens to your son you will panic, lose your head and start screaming. It is not so with sadhus. Their minds are very clear. My relationship with an afflicted person is through God, and to honour this relationship I will accept my duty towards that person and execute it as my karma. The logic is that he is unwell and I am not. I have the strength and the means, therefore, I will call the doctor and do what is necessary to relieve his illness and make him comfortable. We do not panic. If someone has died we say, "Well, what needs to be done? Is his body still in the house or have you removed it?"

To give you an example, in 1971, on the 1st of December, I received a telephone call from Rajnandgaon to say that Satyabrat had died in an accident. I answered, "What can I do?" They asked me what they should do. I said, "Well, gather the acquaintances and perform the funeral rites." They asked me whether I was coming. I said, "Not now." I told them I would come in four or five days to check the administrative work that he had been doing. He was the secretary of the International Yoga Fellowship Movement and I was the president, so my being there was essential for the work. Satyabrat had been my closest disciple and my greatest pal, apart from being Swami Niranjan's father. But what can I do if a man dies? Should I cry? I had a duty towards him which I had to fulfil, for which I had to go to Rajnandgaon. I did not let anyone in the ashram know about this. I informed my in-charge that I would be absent for four days, that I would be leaving in three days time, which swamis would go with me, and asked him to arrange for a certain amount of money.

So we left and were driving along very comfortably. None of those going with me knew about the accident. When we were about a kilometre from Rajnandgaon, I asked my

driver, “Do you know where we are going?” He replied, “Yes, Rajnandgaon.” I asked him, “Do you know why?” He replied, “No.” Then I told him that Satyabrata was dead. He let go of the steering wheel! I told him to either hold the steering wheel or apply the brake before listening any further. What madness! We would have had a crash!

We reached Rajnandgaon and, in my capacity as president of the organization, I conducted some japa and meditation. Then I asked Swami Niranjan’s mother to call the lawyer to settle all the legal and financial matters. Such incidents occur everywhere, both in the lives of lay people and sadhus. The only difference is that our manner of dealing with adversity is absolutely impersonal. This attitude remains through birth and death, victory and defeat, construction and destruction. We also have that same impersonal attitude towards money. Surdas has explained this idea beautifully in one of his poems:

*Destiny cannot be averted.
Rahu, Ketu, the sun and moon
Are located far off in the sky,
Still they come in line at the time of eclipse.
A learned jnani like Vasishtha, after much calculation,
Fixed the date of marriage of Rama and Sita.
Still the death of father; abduction of Sita,
And adversity’s attack on Rama occurred.*

*Ravana, the conqueror of all the lokas,
Who had captivated Death in a well,
Had to succumb to it as destined.
Arjuna, whose charioteer was Lord Krishna,
Could not escape exile or the ensuing battle.
And Draupadi too, who was so dear to Him,
Was insulted and disrobed by Dushasan.*

*A bountiful king like Harish Chandra
Had to accept the slavery of a chandala.
One cannot escape destiny even if one wanders
From country to country, throughout the three lokas.*

*All beings, including gods, human beings and demons,
Are under the control of destiny.
Surdas says, why should you be anxious,
When everything happens by His will?*

There is no sense in getting worried. You should establish the connection with God daily and seek His blessings. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna has also said: "Seek refuge in Him alone, O Arjuna, with all your heart and faith. By His grace only, can you gain supreme peace and the eternal abode."

Everybody should ask for God's blessings every morning. Every householder should sit down twice a day, morning and evening as a rule, and formulate a system whereby he can connect with God. He should bathe at a fixed time and then plug into God. If he is not well, there is no need to bathe, he can simply plug in for some time. At that time he is neither doctor nor lawyer, king nor prime minister, man nor woman. For those ten minutes he is totally naked, with no other identity. One has to become naked before God. After that you can work and fulfil your worldly responsibilities.

There is no need to worry while performing your worldly duties because every success has the name of the person written on it, and that person who is entitled will definitely reap that success. No one can stop it, regardless of the stature of the person. Even Indira Gandhi had to go to jail, despite being the Prime Minister. This must have been written for her somewhere. We are little people, she was big. Everyone has a fixed quota of happiness and sorrow. I am not joking! This is the truth and I have experienced it. This has also been said in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Considering an individual's good and bad actions,
The Lord weighs the cause and sanctions the result.
The result is the outcome of the action in totality,
The scriptures, justice and everything confirm it.*

I had a friend in Sambalpur who was a forest officer. He had a son in Nairobi. One day he went to Hoshiarpur to an astrologer, who had a copy of the *Bhṛigu Samhita*. The astrologer looked up the son's chart and found that it predicted his early death. My friend came to me and I told him that everything happens first in time and then in space. This incident had already happened in time and now all that remained was for it to happen in space. When the time arrived for this incident to happen in space, sure enough, the car in which the son was travelling with his wife overturned and both of them were killed. The father knew of this prediction beforehand and so did I, but still he asked me how that incident was possible. I told him that when something has to happen, it first occurs in eternity, then in time and then in space. Nothing happens all of a sudden.

Similarly, people receive happiness or sorrow according to the amount written against their name. They definitely get the specified amount of both, so there is no need to worry. You may ask why then do we make any effort? We do it because we suffer from an inherent weakness. We think that if we don't work hard, we will suffer from depression. If we decide to sit our life through, convinced of our fate, we will begin to suffer from depression. Man cannot live without thinking and acting, without tension, worry, anxiety and passion. These are necessities. They keep his mind going all the time, otherwise he will become depressed. That is why depression occurs; that is why God has created *kamana* (desire), *vasana* (passion), *trishna* (temptation), *bhaya* (fear), *chinta* (worry). God can remove all of these in just one minute. There are even many sadhus and saints who can do this. However, that would create problems: no sexual drive, no anger, no pride, no greed, no attachment! Such a state should be accessible only to those whose desires have been exhausted.

Forty-five years ago my guru told me, "Don't go into a life of seclusion where you suppress your mind, thoughts, passions, hatreds and worries. Express them. After forty-five years,

when your mind is completely calm and quiet, and you have experienced all the phases of life, then go into seclusion.” That is what I am doing now. I sit all day with nothing to think about at all, but I do not become depressed because I have something else to do. So take God’s blessings. It is very easy to do. Just as a child fools his mother, taking money from her little by little to go to the cinema, you can take blessings from God. It has been rightly said in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

*If one drinks powerful nectar
Without knowing its effects,
Even then the nectar makes one immortal.
Similarly, repeating the name of the Lord
Is bound to yield results.*

I went to Mathura for religious guidance. It is said that no one can find a shivalingam there, but when I was bathing in the Yamuna I found a small shivalingam with Om written on it. Would you explain the significance of this?

In earlier times the Shaivas and Vaishnavas were at loggerheads, just as the Hindus and Muslims are today. At that time these myths were perpetrated about the impossibility of finding a shivalingam in Mathura, or a shaligram in Kashi-Vishwanath. There is no truth behind these statements; they are myths launched by religious sects to mislead people. You do find shivalingams in Mathura or shaligrams in Kashi-Vishwanath because they are both forms of God. Finding either of these is auspicious. You will have to find out how to worship the shivalingam.

Is there a message behind this event?

What could the message be? If you find a gold ornament, what could the message be behind it? Put it in your pocket; it is a precious thing. Some day you will want to worship the shivalingam, then you can perform its pooja regularly. This can be the only message. What higher order can there be than doing pooja?

Can Indian dance be performed as a sadhana?

Whether you do music or dance, mantra or japa in the form of *kala sadhana*, it has to be practised daily. There should be no laziness. In Chidambaram, you see the pose of Nataraja. Parvati was a great expert at dance. Whatever mudras Shiva performed, Parvati would also perform. But when he started the Chidambaram dance she felt shy and left it. That is what the joke is about, because when the dance of Chidambaram is performed you have to lift one leg and turn, otherwise the knee can be injured. A poet describing the dance of Chidambaram has said:

*When you once danced for the protection of the world,
The earth was spellbound, expecting its destruction.
The whole atmosphere, together with the stars
Was frightened by the movement of your hands.
The firmament was stricken
By the swift movement of your matted locks.
O Lord, thy magnanimity is horripilating.*

Shiva is a tattwa. Parvati is a tattwa. The dance of Shiva is the dance of jiva. The dance of Parvati is the dance of jivatma. Both of these occur on the spiritual plane and are events of spiritual life. If you study the form of Lord Shiva in the *Shiva Mahimna Stotra*, you will learn about the concept of twofold energy. It explains how, when the energy becomes operative, you can interpret and understand it; how you can equate Shiva and Parvati scientifically in time and space; how you can equate or compare Parvati in metaphysics.

We say in physics that when time and space come together at the nucleus, then when both meet at a particular point, an explosion takes place. That is precisely the process of a nuclear explosion. Time and space are important concepts in physics and they are also important concepts in yoga. The only difference is in the terminology. Yoga calls it ida and pingala, metaphysics calls it Shiva and Parvati, Vaishnavism calls it Vishnu and Lakshmi. The names are different but nobody knows just what the reality is.

In the *Ramacharitamanas* it has been rightly said:

*Only he can know whom you allow to know,
But by knowing he becomes what you are.*

A mahatma has said, “A doll made of salt went to the sea to measure its depth and ultimately lost itself in the water.” This is what happens to us. On knowing Him one becomes Him. No one has seen these happenings with his own eyes, but there is something behind it. It is a strange play which is beyond human comprehension. Sometimes one’s mind gets agitated and says, “Now you will not get the answer.” When man does not get the answer he has no option but to come back to bhakti yoga. Keep silent, sing bhajans to the Lord and live in peace.

How is it possible to express one’s needs in an ashram?

I think human beings have different wants and different needs. One has to make a very clear distinction between wants and needs. You say, “I want to drink Scotch.” You don’t say, “I need to drink Scotch.” You don’t need Scotch, you want Scotch! In the ashram your needs can be fulfilled, but not your wants. That’s the basic difference. Your wants can be anything. If you try to fulfil your wants under the heading of needs, then there will be a lot of trouble in the ashram. A need is a must for your spiritual life. A want is a must for your sensual and sexual gratification.

Please talk about the problems of possessive attachment. You have had great experience due to the attachment of certain disciples to you. How do you help them?

I am able to help them because I do not have any attachment to them. If I were to play the role of a lover or a beloved in a film, I would certainly play it well. I would identify myself with the act and emotions, but once I was out of that role, what would I have to do with it? One should play the role of a friend, a father, a disciple or a guru properly. If I think all the time, I was a guru, I am a guru and I shall always be a

guru, then I am confusing reality with non-reality. You have to remember that attachment arises only in the absence of knowledge.

In India the story of Rama is performed in the theatre and it is called Rama lila. I remember a Rama lila in which someone prompted Hanuman to say to Rama, "Sir, I want nothing except a bidi!" Rama was confused. This world is a big theatre and you are playing a role. It is nothing more than that. Sometimes you become attached to a person for a period of time and suddenly something happens and you begin to hate him. What happened to the attachment?

You should be able to manage the mind and its behaviour. You should be the master or friend of your mind, not a slave. When a thought comes you must know how to regulate it, because many thoughts come into your mind. For me, the simplest philosophy is, "I am the medium, God is the doer." He makes you His disciple through me, but in your ignorance you do not know that you are God's disciple. You do not know God, so you never think about it in this way.

You come to talk with me about God. You are ultimately connected with God. Your real relationship is with God, not with the person who is in between. If you send somebody a letter through the post office, the postman delivers that letter. Now is that letter connected with you and the receiver, or with you and the postman? You send the letter but the postman only delivers it. You must remember that the guru is only an agent. He just comes in between for some time. Ultimately there should be no attachment, no dependence, no thought of relationships like those we have in the world. We get obsessed, we get caught up. The guru is somebody who comes and wakes you up, that's all.

When someone says, "If you leave me I will die," how would you handle that?

I would say, "Go! You can die. It doesn't matter." For me, death is not very important because I have seen many of my friends die and also come back. Bholenath was my disciple

and after that he took two incarnations; this is his third. He was searching for me and somehow he happened to find me. When he came he told me this. If somebody dies, he only goes away. There is no such thing as death or destruction. There is no elimination. The soul leaves the body when it becomes too old to manage the affairs of life. So it goes in search of another house, another country, another family, another opportunity, that's all. It has been said in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

*Just as the wind mixes together
Clouds, grass, bits of cotton and dirt
And again separates them,
So, the Lord also creates by union
And separates the elements at will.*

Therefore, in a sense, death is a good thing, but it has to come naturally. One should not try to die!

What is your message for the development of humanity from now on?

There is no message. I was never a messenger and I am not one now. A messenger is a prophet or a *nabi*; I am neither. Christ and Mohammed were messengers, I am not. I do not think mankind has any great problems today. People have always been fighting, quarrelling, loving, hating, destroying, meeting, uniting and separating. There is nothing new.

Whatever happened ten thousand years ago is still happening today. What happened in the Satya yuga is happening in the Kali yuga. Even if I had a message for humanity, I would not proclaim myself to be a prophet. I think it is just ego to say, "Oh my children, listen to the commands of the Lord." The actual messenger is God, and if He has a message for you or for mankind, He will choose the messenger. What message can one human being give to another? Somebody will come down and speak for Him. I do not speak for Him. Never make that mistake.

What were the laws of God that you said we should try to follow?

Help your neighbour and do not try to harm anyone. That's all. I think that is how God would like His family to live, because we are all His family. He has a very big family. He would like us to help and not harm each other.

Can yogic sadhana bring to the surface our real nature, our real love which is inside, but which we cannot bring out ourselves?

When you flew from Athens the pilot took you to Delhi, not Munger. Similarly, yoga can lead you to a certain point, but beyond that you will need bhakti.

I lose my concentration if my child disturbs me during pooja. Should I try to correct the child or take myself deeper into the pooja?

When doing pooja, you should concentrate only on the pooja. There should be nothing else in your mind. Of course, if the child in question is very small, you have to make allowances, but if your children are older, it is better to let them face their ups and downs rather than interfering. If you try to attend to something else while you are doing pooja, you will find that you can do neither properly. No matter how hard you try, your mind will move away from the pooja towards the distraction. Therefore, the less you think about anything other than your pooja, the better it will be. Yoga means to quieten the mind and to maintain a one-pointed state.

Does it make any difference if one does seva instead of pooja? I find that I cannot concentrate during pooja, but I can do seva for hours without feeling tired?

Pooja, seva or *karmakand*, ritualistic worship, are stages of sadhana through which people pass. Many people find that when they close their eyes for meditation, their mind becomes very active and distracted. Others feel the same when they do seva or perform rituals, and feel better with the

eyes closed doing meditation. Therefore, as people progress in their sadhana, the sadhana keeps changing. You may find seva suits you now, but later it is possible that another sadhana may appeal to you.

Is all the work here being done by the Santhalis?

The local people, the Santhalis, are good people. They are poor but loving. They have big hearts and small bank balances. All the building work here in the Akhara has been done by the people living within a radius of one to two kilometres. Our builders, electricians, carpenters, workers and architects come from within this two kilometre radius. We did not even have to call people from Deoghar. The Santhalis cleaned up the area here before building, and it was quite a mess. I told them that people had been called to clean up the area so that building could begin. However, the next morning the Santhalis had already cleaned up the field and they wanted to plaster the entire area with mud and cow dung.

The Santhalis are adept at doing the flooring with indigenous material. It looks exactly like a cement floor. The black floor of Raghunath kutir is nothing but mud mixed with cow dung. A certain type of grass is burnt and added to the mixture and this wet mixture is then spread over the ground. Later a stone is used to polish the floor. When water is dropped on the floor, it is gradually absorbed. These people have very good technology.

Please explain about the donation of cows.

The village people are the ones who know how to maintain cows. Cows are a part of their lives. The urban population only know how to drink milk and have forgotten how to keep cows. They should send their cows here. We will look after them well and they will be repaid in the form of blessings. The cows kept by the village people are of the local strain, not breeds from Punjab and Haryana. Even Jersey cows are not in demand here because the bulls that they produce are neuters.

The Marwari community attaches a lot of importance to the donation of cows. A local Marwari helps to transport cows here from Gaya. The cows are examined by a vet and thoroughly checked for disease. Then Swami Satsangi speaks to the head of the village to decide who should receive the cows. Her department is very efficiently organized. She has the full details of all the families living in hundreds of villages in this area on computer, which is something even the government does not have. Swami Niranjan has also started to donate oxen and cows in this area. Today the first pair of oxen are being given. Gradually every needy person will become recipients because oxen are very necessary for a farmer.

(To the recipient of the pair of oxen:) Listen, the way to your house has now been cleared for Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity. Serve the oxen more than you serve your sons and daughters. Your children will spend your wealth, but the oxen will earn wealth for you. Earning members have joined your family. Care for them as if they were your sons, not animals. Do seva to them every day. Massage their bodies like you massage your father's aching limbs. Serve them and don't ever hit them or twist their tails. Give them beautiful names with love. Ask your wife to graze them well. Work efficiently with them and when your work is done, let them till the soil of some other needy persons as well.

Why should seva to the cow be performed?

A cow gives milk just like trees give fruit and mothers give children. A cow has to be carefully looked after. I have a degree in the scientific aspects of keeping cows. I studied all this in my childhood. All of you who have cows, please note that a person who has tuberculosis should never attend to a cow. Only those people who do not have cough-related problems should attend to a cow. The weakest point of a cow is that it is susceptible to droplet infections and its milk gets infected.

Twenty-three cows have been pledged. We are trying to find out which houses have TB patients and how many

family members are infected. If all the members of a family are TB patients, we will not give a cow to that family. The cow will definitely contract TB because it is very susceptible to it. Keep this in mind.

Cow dung produces a combustible gas called *gobar* gas, which can be burnt in lamps to give light. This process also produces high quality manure. Gobar gas can be used for cooking by connecting the line to a gas stove. There is no need for firewood; cow dung is the only fuel required. Even gas cylinders are not needed. Two cows are sufficient to meet a family's gas requirements for cooking. Even if a cow is barren or old and does not give milk, she will be able to cut the cost of fire wood.

The problem with villages these days is that not everyone who lives in the village works there. Now the young people go off to school so that they may all wear trousers and become clerks. The youth are then attracted in a different direction. To have earning power is one thing; self-sufficiency is another. Self-sufficiency is superior because you do not have to depend on anyone. All that is required are some vegetables from the garden, some milk from the cow which grazes on your land, and some grain that also grows on your land. One does not need anything else.

Once in a while the man can work as a casual labourer and earn twenty to twenty-five rupees daily for other minor expenses. The family then lives in *ananda*, bliss. This is called self-sufficiency. Earning enables the family to buy their necessities such as vegetables, turmeric, spices, flour, pulses and rice from the market. In order to be able to buy all these items, the ability to earn is necessary. However, to earn one has to live in the town or city, which means paying rent, electricity bills and taxes. In this way life within the society becomes complicated.

What is the best sadhana?

Repeat God's name, spread God's name, write God's name, do japa of God's name, sing God's name, teach God's name, inspire the people to love God's name. On the other hand,

if you prefer, you can earn and donate money to help worthy people in one form or another. This is a rule of dharma. In the *Bhagavad Gita* it is said that donations should not be made to undeserving people because this breeds *tamas*, lethargy, and the donation is not respected. Therefore, donations should always be made through the medium of organized institutions. An organized institution is one which has a strong discipline maintained by strict rules. An organization which does not strictly enforce its rules will have anarchy on its hands.

How much schooling is necessary for village children?

In the villages it is sufficient for children to study until eighth or ninth grade or to do their matriculation, tenth grade. I do not believe much in obtaining degrees. If one wants to have a professional career and become an engineer, lecturer, doctor or lawyer, one should go onto advanced studies, but if one wants a simple, contented life and can manage on a meagre income, it is enough to matriculate.

In the West I have seen that many children study until eighth grade and then leave school. It is compulsory for them to study until eighth grade or their parents will be arrested. The government enforces these laws. So even in the West many children do not go on to higher studies. After eighth or tenth grade they find a job and start to earn money. Those who want to study further use this money for their study expenses. Those who are not inclined to study further, do not. In India, since the British Raj, it has become the system to study up to graduation level. People spend ten thousand rupees or more on higher education and then they cannot find a job, nor is their money refunded. This is the fault of our education system and nobody is ready to rectify it.

Why do you refuse to meet people for most of the year?

I have settled here in the village. I am inherently a man of the village. A sadhu belongs to the forests. I uphold the rules that apply to me. A paramahansa lives in solitude

and has nothing to do with anyone. He makes himself ready to leave the body. When one has to leave everyone eventually, why not do it in advance! Therefore, I do not meet people here. In the *Nirvanopanishad* (40–41) it has been said:

*Living in this great cemetery
Is like living in the garden of bliss.
Solitude is the locality,
Wherein bliss is the monastery.*

This month of Aghan will end on the 17th of December, and from the 18th the black flag will go up. Right now the flag is down. It is up only when I am in sadhana. I have renounced geru. I do not consider myself to be a sannyasi, a brahmachari, a grihasthi, a vanaprasthi, a brahmin, a kshatriya, a vaishya, a shudra, a man, a woman, a guru or a disciple. I simply live in solitude. I do not accept any titles bestowed on me. I live a free life, unshackled by such roles. It has been stated in the *Nirvanopanishad* (57):

*Uprooting of the karmas is the patched quilt,
And the burning of illusion, I-ness and ego too.*

The villagers in this area are very simple at heart. They are also very poor. People who have come to meet me have brought blankets, clothes, children's toys, books and many other things. We will distribute them to the villagers who live around here. They will at least have a warm blanket to ward off the cold. That is the only interaction that interests me; the rest does not mean anything. If we can share what we have with the village people, the atmosphere will definitely be pure and there will be a friendly relationship between us. This creates a positive environment. If two people fight, it creates a negative environment. Air is not the only component of a good environment. *Bhavana*, feelings, are also vital components of a good environment. Of course, on the physical level too, the air needs to be pure. When people bring items for distribution, it also helps their dharma and

karma. Doing pooja is not the only way to work out your karma. Sharing the joys and sorrows of others is also very necessary.

Do the poor have a right to our extra wealth?

Whether it is their right or not is a different matter. We must see what our duty is. Our duty is to share our extra wealth with the poor. Bringing assistance to the villages will help the situation that exists in the cities, because the poor in the cities are migrants from the villages. If the situation in the villages improves, migration to the cities will decrease and so will the population there. This will improve the crime situation that exists in the cities; theft, robbery, hooliganism and fraud will lessen. When migrant labourers are unable to make ends meet, they grab in whatever manner they can. What we need is ruralization, and what is happening is urbanization. The atmosphere and social structure of a city are totally different to that of a village.

We do not get an opportunity to go to the villages, so we don't know how to serve the people there.

There is no need for you to go to the villages. What seva can you do there? Whatever you wish to donate can be done through an institution. If you give charity and assistance to the poor in the cities, it will only increase the congestion and make the city dirtier, because if the migrants and others get free assistance they will continue to stay on there. Therefore, assistance and charity should be directed towards the villages. Villages all over the world are like pregnant women, while the cities and towns are like barren women. If rapid urbanization stops, crime, poverty, filth and slums can be eradicated. In order to achieve this, help must reach the villages.

Kautilya has said: "A wise person should give wealth to those who are full of good qualities. Wealth should not go into the hands of those who are undeserving. The cloud takes salty water from the ocean and redistributes it to all living beings, after making it sweet. Similarly, if wealth goes

into the hands of the proper person, it is returned again in manifold ways.”

In the *Bhagavad Gita* (17:20–22), we find the description of three types of gifts: “The gift which is given to one who does nothing in return, knowing it to be a duty to give in a fit place and time to a worthy person, is held to be sattwic. The gift which is given with a view to receiving something in return, or looking for a reward, or reluctantly, is held to be rajasic. The gift that is given at a wrong place and time, to unworthy persons, without respect or with insult, is declared to be tamasic.”

How can the farmer be encouraged to help himself?

There are rules about how charitable work should be undertaken. It has to be done in a very organized manner. If things are simply distributed in the villages, what difference will it make to anyone in the long run? Actual help means enabling the villagers to generate their own strength and ability. The basic requirement of a farmer is a pair of oxen, a cow and access to irrigation facilities. They can do with an inadequate hut, but not without these basic needs. A cow is necessary because, even if the farmer does not have vegetables, his family can have their rotis with milk. Farmers are very important for our well-being. If they revolt, the riches of the wealthy will be of no use. I do not like class conflict. All I know is that a cow, a pair of oxen and a good source of water are a must for any farmer.

Please tell us about the work of Sivananda Math.

Swami Niranjan organizes the work in Munger, Deoghar and also in Orissa. Work goes on in many districts. The sannyasins are sent to different areas to construct houses, hospitals and arrange for medical supplies. Everything is done in an organized manner. Tribhuvan, the three storey building which is the headquarters of Sivananda Math, is ready for use. Fifteen to twenty of Swami Niranjan’s sannyasins are here working for the organization. There is also a doctor.

Another lady doctor is learning acupuncture in Raipur. Acupuncture is a form of treatment which does not require any medicine nor, therefore, any expenditure. The towns and cities have nursing homes, hospitals, doctors and nurses. They also have centres for homeopathy and ayurveda. All the means are there. The villages have absolutely no way of getting any treatment. If a villager from Rikhia has a heart attack, he is bound to die because there is no way he can be transported to Deoghar. So, these are the areas of Swami Niranjana's work.

What is your opinion about the contribution of politics to society?

Fifty years of experience has taught me that politics has made no particular contribution to society in any country throughout the world. The poor nations have remained poor and the illiterate nations have remained illiterate, be it India, Pakistan, Nepal, Burma, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, China or any other nation. Nothing has really changed anywhere. All over the world, politicians are corrupt. No country is free from this shadow, neither the rich nor the poor.

The nations that have made substantial progress have done so purely on the basis of the strength and effort of the masses. Those countries progressed where the masses were aware and strong and knew how to struggle in life. In India, states like Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana, Gujarat and Maharashtra have made progress, while Bihar, Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa have not. The reason why some states have not made progress is because the people of those regions do not have the mentality to strive and struggle through adversity.

Punjab is now secure on many fronts. The people are prosperous; they are also spiritual and religious. It is the same with Gujarat. Every village in Maharashtra has gone ahead; its agriculture is very well organized. All these changes have been made by the village people, relying on their own strength. Those countries where the people depend on the government for help, financial or otherwise, have remained where they were.

All the work and activities of politicians is geared towards obtaining or remaining in power. Issues like reservation or sanction of grants are played up simply to gather votes for the next election. There is no sincerity or honesty behind their work and nothing ever comes to the villages. Therefore, I have never had faith in politics. I could easily have made a name in politics. I had education, resources and many contacts. I had and still have all the means, the organization and administration. I could still win from any constituency in India!

How do we know when it is time to lay aside our worldly obligations and duties to prepare ourselves for the ultimate journey?

About fifty years ago, I read a story called 'Four Letters'. It was a drama. The basic idea was that every human being receives four letters and then a warrant. The first letter arrives when his hair begins to turn grey, the second when his eyesight becomes poor, the third when his teeth begin to fall out, and the fourth when his body becomes aged and weak. But sometimes the fourth letter arrives long after the third one. You find that some people have very strong bodies, even though their hair may have turned grey and their eyes and teeth become weak. This often happens with active people.

Has Sivananda Math started irrigation work?

Now we are boring a well which will be forty to fifty feet deep and will touch a perennial source of water. We will use a monoblock pump for irrigation purposes. Monoblock pumps require a continuous supply of water. Aluminium pipes can be hooked together and we have found that the water can be sent up to Deoghar. With this system we can supply water anywhere for irrigation purposes. If we find a rich source of water, then four to five monoblock pumps can be installed.

Do you use a generator for electricity?

No, there is a transformer for electricity. We have no problem there. I am the king of Bihar in the real sense, but a king without a crown! A twenty-five volt transformer has been installed and now it is being replaced with a sixty volt. The capacity has been increased because the requirement here has increased. The transformer belongs to the government.

If the transformer belongs to the government and they give it to you, then why don't we get one in Bhagalpur?

Things happen differently here. Deoghar has a different policy. *Deoghar* means the 'abode of god'. Worshipers, devotees of God, saints and great souls come here for satsang. If the electricity department is asked to provide electricity for the satsang, the power has to come from Patna if it is not available here. On those days a linesman sits here for two hours daily in the afternoons. He has orders to remain here for one month. If anything goes out of order, he has to rectify the fault. The required facilities are provided at any cost because it is the right of this town to hold satsang. Those facilities will not be given to businessmen or for running iron factories, but they will be provided here because satsang is taking place.

Deoghar is a spiritual town, not a commercial one. Baidyanath Dham, the temple there, is large and magnificent. Deoghar is an awakened town. People from Nepal to Kanyakumari come to pay their respects and ask for their wishes to be fulfilled there. Deoghar is the cremation ground of Sati and, therefore, it has great importance. After Kamakhya, it is considered to be the second tantric seat of Devi. Since it is a tantric seat, there is no prohibition on drinking liquor and eating meat, as is the case with all Vaishnavite places.

Deoghar is a great pilgrim centre; it does not thrive on business. The people here are not as prosperous as those of Bhagalpur or Munger. The people of Munger are very prosperous. Bariarpur, near Munger, produces very good quality parval, which is a green vegetable; they send

truckfuls of parval all over India. When I was in the ashram they used to offer sackfuls of fresh parval from their fields for use in the ashram. They are very rich people. Gradually, the people here are now becoming aware that they can also become self-sufficient. I am not saying that they can become millionaires, but a farmer should be able to lead a comfortable life. He should be able to afford a glass of milk for his children. Children need milk. If he can't do that it is a disgrace to our dharma.

What are the saints and great souls of India doing? If all their energy were utilized then there would be no need for any government. The saints and great souls of this country are very powerful. Each Jagatguru could look after a state. We would have a battalion of people behind us. Actually we are the rulers of this country, but we keep a very low profile because we do not want to enter politics. We do not want to be involved in any hanky-panky. Nor do we want to include politicians in the spiritual movement because we do not need them.

The saints and great souls of India should give satsang. It is the dharma of saints and sages to make people sing the Lord's name, to put them on the correct path, to make them tread the path of dharma, to give them the knowledge of discrimination and of the Vedas. Besides this, they should distribute cows and bulls in the villages and make arrangements for a regular water supply. The dwellings in which they live need not be of cement. After all, where were all the Vedas, Puranas and Smritis written? In forests, in thatched huts, while sitting on the ground. And they are considered to be the greatest masterpieces in the world today.

How can one adopt a foreign language like English over Hindi? The pull of the mother tongue is very strong.

Our mother tongue is actually Sanskrit, not Hindi. The language of the father is Hindi, but the father tongue and fatherland have no significance. In India only the mother tongue and motherland are of significance. Our mother tongue is Sanskrit and our motherland is India. Now, if you

cannot speak Sanskrit, which is a beautiful language, you can get a lot of pleasure from speaking in English. People even dream in English these days! English is the most widely spoken language in the world.

Today, if you want to read a book on any subject, it will be available in English, whether it is religious or spiritual, the Vedas or Ramayana. Many of the scriptural texts have been translated into English by great scholars like Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Sivananda and Bhagavat Prabhupad, and they are very authentic. The printing of these texts is of good quality. With books printed in Hindi, the pages often start coming out after two or three days. The standard is very low and the process of printing is also very cumbersome. Many good quality offset presses are available in English. Typesetting has become computerized. At Munger, desktop publishing is being done. The matter is typed into the computer and copies are printed off at once, without any problems. English is a fast language and takes less space to write. In Hindi, you have to leave a line for the vowels, but you don't have to do that in English. So less space and fewer pages are used.

I am sixty-three years old. What can I study now? Isn't it time for me to go from this world?

The age of sixty is not necessarily the time to leave, although one may be prepared to go. However, it is certain that those who leave the body while thinking about others, working for others and accepting unknown people as their own are benevolent people who work for the welfare of humanity. In their next birth they will be *jivanmuktas*, free from the bondage of worldly life. They will be public welfare workers which is the definition of a *jivanmukta*. They are different from *dehamuktas*, those who have attained freedom from the body. The purpose of all *jivanmuktas* is to work for the public welfare, not for themselves. Their actions are for the people of the world, *lokanam karmaya*, so that they may attain *videha mukti*, freedom from birth and death.

In India, the focus of public welfare activities should be on the villages. Once the villages are improved, the cities will automatically smarten up. If the villages are spoiled, the cities will also be spoiled. When I used to visit Bombay, it had a population of three million. Now the population is ten million. When I visited Bombay I would feel very happy and think that it was the London of India, but now it is really unpleasant to go to Bombay, not to speak of Calcutta. I stopped going there. Therefore, all our efforts should be concentrated on the upliftment of the villages as far as possible.

You are interested in your own selves. I am interested in others. If you practise self-introspection, you will realize that generally everyone remains lost in themselves. Psychologists also say that most people are introverted. Some people like me are extroverts, they think about others, but most people are introverts, lost in themselves.

Satsang 23

1 December 1994, Morning

Last year you advised me not to scold my children. I acted on your advice and stopped scolding my child. As a result, my child has stopped going to school.

Children should never be scolded. If children scold each other, it is perfectly all right. If adults scold each other, even then it is all right, but it is not right for an adult to scold a child, because the mental frequencies of a child and those of an adult are very different. The patterns of conditioning in the adult brain that lead the parent to scold the child are not present in the child's brain. Therefore, the child cannot understand the point you are trying to make at all. It is also true that those parents who are not mentally balanced are the ones who scold their children. It is the adult's problem, not the child's, which causes the adult to scold the child.

This is not my theory; it is the conclusion of the great psychologists of the world. Just think about it, man has been born to enjoy himself. There is *ananda*, bliss, in nature. The birds chirp, the animals run around in the forest, what bliss! Yet nowhere can happy people be found. The accepted lifestyle is not the ideal way of living. Wanting to cast your children in your own mould means asking them to make the same mistakes as you have done. If you want to cast your children in a perfect mould, fine, but your own mould is defective. You suffer from illness, you worry, you fight, you cheat, you lie, you have bad thoughts in your mind. Is that

how you want your child to be? This is a weakness that adults suffer from. And that is precisely the reason why humanity is not progressing faster.

Parents are the greatest obstacles in the path of children. They do not allow children to grow naturally. They want children to grow up in their pattern. If the pattern is good, I am prepared to accept it. But most parents are worried, dishonest, sick, unstable, and they want their child to be cast in their mould! No, children must grow up naturally, they should understand the environment and the situations in society naturally; they should learn by trial and error.

Children should also be subject to the law of survival of the fittest. Due to modern technology, unfit people are surviving today, and that is why everyone is in trouble. Those who are unfit have problems, therefore, those who are fit also have problems. Everywhere you find problems of housing, unemployment and inflation. Who has created this situation? The unfit who are surviving. Healthwise very few people are spartan.

There is a place called Sparta in Greece. I have been there. In olden times it was the custom to leave a new born baby out in the open for one night. If the baby was still alive in the morning, it would be brought in and reared. If the baby died, it was considered to have been unworthy of survival. Only someone who has the inner strength to survive has the right to live. Just because a child is born to me or from the womb of my wife does not give the child the right to live. Only the fit should have the right to live. This is where we have gone wrong.

Let your children be free and independent. They will observe the atmosphere, the society, everything around them, and mould themselves accordingly. When they mould themselves at a high speed they will make mistakes. No one has ever progressed without making mistakes. No one wants to make mistakes, yet everyone makes them. What is strange is that everyone has their own definition of what a mistake is. People have made rules which cannot possibly be honoured

in society, but they are unable to change those rules. There is a facade behind which every rule is violated. Every rule is broken behind a curtain, not openly. This is called humbug.

An honest human being is one who leads the same life in public and in private, who leads the same life inside and outside his mind. There has to be unity in one's behaviour in life, between what one thinks and what one does. When the external life is of one type and the internal consciousness has another pattern, this is hypocrisy. Most people live a life of hypocrisy because society has made certain impossible rules. One accepts these rules and behaves in a certain way in society, but within oneself, one has one's own life. So everybody leads a double life and this causes mental problems. For most of us it creates guilt.

There is a basic error in the rules which have been made for society. These rules should be practical and framed in such a way that even weak people are able to follow them. However, the rules which have been made can be applicable only to a person of the stature of Hanuman, and so the majority of people are not able to follow them. What is the logic behind making such rules? Rules have been made for the entire society which only Sita could follow successfully. Naturally we end up breaking such rules. Sita was the *Bhagavati*, the Mother. We are just ordinary people.

Rules should be made keeping the ordinary person in mind, not based on ideals like Hanuman, Sita and Rama. A great man should not be our ideal. You and I cannot live the way Christ lived. How can we be ideal? We cannot be like Moses, Mohammed, Rama or Hanuman. We are so weak! Hanuman was a celibate. I may worship Hanuman, but he cannot become my ideal in life, because he is demonstrating qualities that are impossible to attain. Most people could not even consider maintaining his kind of unbroken celibacy, so why try to make him the ideal?

One should have practical ideals in life. Ideals can be many different things, but they have to be practical. Otherwise, one does some things openly and some things in

secret, behind closed doors. This leads to a double life which creates guilt within the mind. One feels that one is a bad person and that creates a split in the personality. Everyone has the same experience; it happens in every religion. Priests also do the same, drinking alcohol in their rooms and then preaching to the public not to drink. What is more, they even excommunicate those who drink after condemning them in the strongest words.

Under the rule of Gaddafi, Muslims in Libya are not supposed to drink. So, instead, people go to the border and purchase Scotch whisky and champagne at three times the price, and everyone drinks. Similarly, in Iran the women have to cover themselves with a chadar. Men and women are not even permitted to look at each other. I am not talking about India because in these matters India has more acceptance. If you are good, you are good. If you are a little less good you are still good, and if you are very good then you are excellent.

Things work in a different way in India. Some countries are not so open. In Greece, even in this day and age, if a widow has an affair, she will be stoned to death in the village square. This is still happening at the end of the twentieth century! How can you expect a man to live an open life, and not a double life, in such a society? Leading one life is the sign of a great man. It has been said in the scriptures:

*Great souls practise what they preach,
Whereas the low-minded say one thing and do another.*

It is the parents who are responsible for this schism. A child's behaviour depends entirely on how the parents handle him. Do not scold or punish children on any account for what you think they have done wrong. If your son does not want to go to school, do not force him. One day he will leave the hare behind, just like the tortoise. What is there in school education? Swami Niranjan never went to school. He has no idea what it is like to study in a school. Today you can talk to him on any subject under the sun – English, mathematics,

science, geography, history, physics or computer science. He used to play and get up to every possible type of mischief, and I allowed it.

I make my son do yoga nidra daily because he does not go to school. Will this help him to change?

First of all, stop worrying about him. I used to teach yoga nidra to Swami Niranjan because I was doing research, not because I wanted to make him something. Gold is gold, a diamond is a diamond and iron is iron by birth. It is no use polishing iron in the hope of converting it into gold. Swami Niranjan is Swami Niranjan by birth. I did not make him Swami Niranjan. I taught him yoga nidra because I was trying to observe its effects on the subconscious mind. I was doing an experiment and it proved successful.

I had read in psychology that suggestions given in a state of sleep enter the deeper layers of the mind. To test this I used to read the Vedas, Upanishads and other texts to Swami Niranjan during yoga nidra. I did not do it to make him into something outstanding or because I was worried about his future. What would he have done with those achievements? A sadhu needs only two rotis. He is never bothered about becoming something. If a sadhu achieves something along the way, well and good. If not, it is equally good. He is happy just being a mendicant, smoking his chillum and chanting 'Bam Bam Mahadev'. We believe it is the will of God. Ultimately, it is God's will and not mine that will prevail. In the Ramayana, while consoling Bharata, Sage Vasishtha says:

*Destiny is too powerful to be resisted,
Loss and gain, life and death, infamy and repute,
All are in the hands of the Almighty.*

This is my philosophy in life. If I have to be a beggar, I will be a beggar. If I have to be a debauchee, I will be a debauchee.

Kabir has rightly said:

*Your destiny is already written by the Lord,
No rewriting or remodelling is now possible.
It cannot be increased or lessened by a single particle,
Though crores of remedies are tried, none will avail.
The qualities one has been born with will surely remain.
Even if one endeavours with all his might,
Fate will not be increased or diminished by one iota.*

I do not think that this universe works according to your wishes. It works on certain principles. There are certain laws of karma, certain laws of action and reaction. This is a perfect world made by a perfect being. God has no imperfections. God is most perfect. Whatever He has created, He has created with absolute laws. He is very kind, but He has created death which nobody likes. Suppose He had not created death, what would have happened? Humanity would have piled up, body over body, like floors in a high rise buildings, storey upon storey, first floor, second floor, third floor. I would be on top of you and you would be on top of him. Just imagine that situation!

God is so kind that He ends our life and takes us away. He made the law of death. Of course, he made the law of birth also. How happy it makes you to have a child! The entire household rejoices. Everyone congratulates you. Kabir has said:

*What if a son is born?
Why do you feel such intense pleasure?
This is only the to and fro movement
Of the shuttle in a loom.*

When someone dies, no one congratulates the kith and kin because death is considered an unfortunate happening. But God says that the law of death is correct. In fact, he has made this law out of love and compassion for this world. What would have happened if he had not made this law? God is all merciful. He is the *Poorna Paramatma*. Whatever he does, he does correctly and to perfection. God has made a program

for everyone. He has made one for me too. There is no use in worrying. Just do your karma and follow your dharma. That is all. Kabir Das has also said:

*This world is not a permanent place to stay,
It is a travellers' lodge in a foreign land.
This world is like a folded piece of paper
Which dissolves even with a drop of water.
This world is a garden of thorns
In which one dies after being entangled.
This world is a thick, impassable jungle
Which must be burned by fire to clear the way.
Kabir says, O men of wisdom, remember
That the safest abode is the name of the Lord.*

Many people quote Malukadas:

*A python does no servitude,
Neither does a bird work anywhere.
Malukadas declares
That the Lord is the caretaker of all.*

In the *Bhagavad Gita* (3: 4–5), the Lord has said: “Not by non-performance of actions does man reach actionlessness, nor by mere renunciation does he attain to perfection. Verily none remain for even a moment without performing action, all are made to act by the qualities born of Nature.”

Why should you do your karma? Because if you do not, you will go mad. You will become what you have to whether you do anything about it or not, but if you do not do your karma you will go mad. You have to keep doing something and thinking about something. You have to be constantly engaged in some work. Whatever you get in this life is predestined. You get it because you had to get it, it was meant for you. What else can you do but what you are doing now? You have to do something to fill in the time. If you sit all day doing nothing, you will get depressed and die. That is the reason why God has given mankind karmas, worries, hassles, and also courage and patience. This maintains sanity

in the human mind. Rabindranath Tagore has said it very beautifully:

*I am not to be liberated by renunciation alone.
I experience the pleasure of liberation,
Even in thousands of bondages of love.
From Thy flame I will continue to light
Innumerable lights in my life and arrange them
On the sacrificial altar of Thy temple.
No, I will never arrest my sense organs
Within the fetters of self-control.
In my senses of sight, hearing and touch,
There will be the feeling of Thy bliss.
All the darkness of my misgivings will be illumined
By offering my being as the fuel of the ananda-yajna.
And all my desires will ripen into fruits of love.*

The events that take place in our lives today have already taken place in the past. These events happen again in the present. For example, if a person dies today you take him to be dead today, whereas his death had already taken place somewhere in the past. Therefore, according to the *Bhṛigu Samhita*, if you read a person's horoscope, his date of death and other events in his life can be known prior to the date when they actually take place.

Whatever happens in the world at a certain time occurs in many dimensions. This event of life and death takes place at many levels. Events first take place in eternity, then they take place in time, then they take place in space. What is happening now in the outside world are the events in space. But before an event has taken place in space, as is happening now, it must have taken place somewhere in time and earlier it must have taken place in eternity. The events unfold themselves in different dimensions. This is just one unfoldingment.

Therefore, your first duty in life is not towards your children, your wife or yourself. Your first duty is only towards God and then to man. If you do not realize your duty to

God, then your duty to man is egotistical. It is not pure. You have all put the cart before the horse. God should be first and everything else next, but you have put everything else first and God next. Well, drive on.

What should be our first duty towards God?

Your prime duties towards God are: singing His name, total surrender to Him, listening to His lila, doing pooja to Him and thinking about Him. In the *Srimad Bhagavata*, the Lord has said:

*One who wants to achieve my bhakti
Should have deep reverence for my story,
Sing continuously my name and praise
And worship me reverently with hymns.*

Is God formless or with form?

God is neither formless nor with form. The truth is that he is both formless and with form. Tulsidas says:

*No difference exists between
The formless God and the God of form.
Thus speak the Vedas and Puranas,
The munis and the wise.
The same formless, unseen,
Unborn and attributeless God
Takes the form impressed
By the love of the devotee.*

Kabir Das has also said:

*The formless God is my father
And the God of form my mother.
Whom to praise and whom to denounce?
Both sides of the balance are in equilibrium.*

What is the form of cotton? Is it a thread or a length of cloth from the market? Is it the shirt, trousers or cap you are wearing? Cotton has no form, but all these are forms

of cotton. What is the form of gold? Is it your bracelet or ear-rings? Gold has no form but all the forms it takes are of gold. Your necklace, earrings and anklets are its form; a lump of gold is also its form. None of these forms is the one and only form. A form is something which is everlasting and unchanging. Similarly, God has no form and all forms are His form. Whichever form catches your attention, sticks in your mind and eventually manifests before you is the form of God. Therefore, it is said in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

*The Lord is one, free of desire, formless,
Nameless, unborn, satchidananda and divine,
He is omnipresent, in the form of the universe.
Even such a Lord incarnated in a human body
And played different roles for the sake of His devotees.
Such is the unassuming, compassionate nature
Of the supreme and loving Lord.*

How can one have darshan of God?

First of all disconnect the energy which you put into worldly matters. Disconnect your mind and thoughts which revolve around the world twenty-four hours a day. It is all right to think of the world for half an hour, one or two hours, six or eight hours, but people think about the world for the whole twenty-four hours. Out of fear they spend a little time going to church on Sundays, or doing namaz on Fridays, or worshipping Lord Shiva on Mondays, so that they may not incur the wrath of God. Otherwise their life is completely dedicated to worldly matters. People only remember God to ask for the welfare of themselves and their families. This is not the way. I remember a poem:

*Why prayer and why austerities?
O worshipper, whose bhakti is this?
You are frightened of your sins,
Therefore you insult yourself.
Instead of praying continuously,*

*If you show compassion, even for a moment,
To a person who is in distress,
I firmly believe that that Truth
Will come to you and pay respects.*

You must make God the first priority. Put Him first. He should come before you. You are unhappy because you put yourselves before Him. Mankind is unhappy because it has reversed the priorities. Spiritual life or divine life is not man's priority. Man leads such a life only because it helps him to find peace, freedom from tension, security and solace. What are your priorities? Passions, attachments, anxieties. There is a sloka in *Viveka Chudamani* which relates to this:

*Instead of being attentive
And attempting to gain liberation
From the bondage of avidya
And attaining the grace of the Lord,
One who lives for the sake of the body alone
Is committing suicide without any doubt.*

You are anxious twenty-four hours of the day. Will I reach the train on time? – anxiety. Oh, I have eaten too much, I may get diarrhoea – anxiety. Is my child studying enough? – anxiety. He hasn't come home from school yet. What has happened to him? – anxiety. I have a slight temperature – anxiety. It is very cold today – anxiety. You live in a state of anxiety neurosis twenty-four hours a day! A child going to school worries all the time, "Will I pass or fail?" Those who are good students will worry, "Will I get a first class pass?" Never mind about the second and third class students!

Before a youth gets married, he is anxious. While he is getting married he is anxious. After marriage there is anxiety. If the wife is good, there is anxiety; if the wife is bad, there is anxiety. If the husband is good, there is anxiety; if the husband is bad, there is anxiety. You suffer from anxiety twenty-four hours a day, yet you want to achieve something in life and have a strong, healthy mind. You want your mind

to be as infallible as an arrow shot from Arjuna's bow. This is not possible in your present state.

In order to achieve this, first of all, you have to control your mind to such an extent that it completely lets go of useless matters. Of course, you have to do what is necessary. Your wife and children have to be given love. You can give them love like the hero in the movies, like Amitabh Bachchan loves his wife and children in the films. This type of love should be adequate for your family's needs. Why do you give them real love? In the films the actors love or hate according to what the script demands. You love or hate a child, you love or hate a woman, if it is necessary. Real love should be reserved for God; real love is bhakti.

I try very hard but cannot keep my mind under control.

How can you? If you want to collect water it has to be kept in a vessel or a glass. But you want to collect it on the ground where it will run off in different directions. The way has clearly been defined in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Those who collect strings of attachment
With mother, father, relations, sons, wife,
Body, wealth, house, friends and family,
Make a rope out of them and tie it to my feet.
Those who are impartial, having no desires,
In whose heart there is no place
For happiness and sorrow, courage and fear,
Such bhaktas reside in my heart,
In the same manner as riches
Reside in the heart of a greedy man.*

If you want to collect water, get a glass ready first and then pour the water into it so that the water is contained in one place. You have to provide a base so the water does not run everywhere. In the same way you need a base for the mind so that it becomes stable. You need a base to control the mind. At present, your base is defective. It is like a container with a hundred holes; water escapes as soon as you pour it in. It

is better to get a new container rather than plugging up the holes. The cost is the same.

Stabilizing the mind in one place is called yoga. The mind is always active, always restless. This is a truth. Yoga is fixing the mind at one point. The means adopted to reach this end is also called yoga. So, yoga is the means and also the end. When the mind becomes restless it needs to be stabilized, and by stabilizing the mind one attains yoga. When the mind becomes quiet, that is the state of yoga. The means to attain this end is also called yoga.

Sri Krishna has described eighteen types of yoga in the *Bhagavad Gita*. The first chapter is called Vishad Yoga. Here it says that yoga begins with *vishad*, depression, unhappiness, sadness. When do you try to concentrate the mind? When there is depression and imbalance in the mind. The process of yoga begins with depression. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:7), Arjuna says to Sri Krishna: “My heart is overpowered by the taint of pity; my mind is confused as to duty. I ask Thee: Tell me decisively what is good for me. I am Thy disciple. Instruct me who has taken refuge in Thee.”

The second chapter is Samkhya Yoga. *Samkhya* means having a proper understanding of everything. What is the mind? What are thoughts? What are impressions? What are samskaras? What are karmas? What is buddhi? How do the faculties of the mind affect each other? All these concepts have to be clear because the mind is not one entity; it is not a homogeneous substance. It is a computer made of millions of parts joined together. It is necessary to know the circuits of this computer mind. For this, a proper guru is required who has the knowledge of these things and can help you to understand.

If you want to rob a house, first of all you must know where the booty is. If you just turn up with a revolver, you won't be able to find the valuables. You can kill everybody one by one, but you still won't know where the ornaments are kept because you didn't investigate beforehand. In the same way, everything must be investigated before the mind

is attacked. This same mind which flits around restlessly all over the place can take you halfway towards God. It will carry you piggyback style on its shoulders. It will say, “Come to me, Mataji. Sit on my back and I will take you halfway towards God. However, I don’t have permission to take you beyond that.”

The mind is your friend when it is under control. When the mind is not under control it is your worst enemy. In fact, man’s mind is the cause of both his bondage and his freedom. You should know the totality of the mind, the vrittis, sankalpas, passions, karmas, influences, innate desires and instincts. You should know everything. Once you know the mind, then you will know how to serve it, because the mind is not your enemy, it is your friend. Just as a horse out of your control will overturn the cart, so the mind is an enemy when it is not under control. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:67), Sri Krishna says: “The mind which follows in the wake of the wandering senses, carries away discrimination, as the wind carries away a boat on the waters.”

For most people the mind is an enemy. Why is it that so few have it under control?

That is because our parents have taught us how to eat and excrete, but not how to control our minds. Right from the beginning they teach us impractical things. Parents tell children not to lie, but they lie themselves. They say, “Don’t tell lies and you will succeed in life.” They don’t tell them that if they speak the truth they may also encounter difficulties. King Harischandra spoke the truth and lost his kingdom. It was only due to the accidental death of his son, Rohitashava, that he regained his kingdom. Otherwise he would have spent the rest of his life as an undertaker burning bodies in a cremation ground.

Parents tell their children to speak the truth, but they don’t tell them what truth is because the parents themselves don’t know what truth is. There has been a lot of discussion about truth in our scriptures. Eventually it was said, “Speak

the truth which is agreeable, don't speak the truth which is disagreeable." This is the condition imposed on speaking the truth! Yes, you can tell lies. What difference does it make? It was also said, "To present the facts as reality is not the truth." It is not correct to call a truth a truth under all circumstances. There are many examples in the scriptures to prove this point. Sometimes people do not even know the difference between a truth and an untruth. Therefore, for parents to calmly say to their child, "Don't tell lies" is rather impractical.

Our parents have not shaped us in the mould of spirituality. From the time we are born, they have shaped us in the mould of *moha*, attachment. We became their toys and they played with us like dolls. My mother enjoyed it, but it was a punishment for me. I stayed in her womb for nine months. It used to burn me. I asked God, "Please let me out quickly, I am suffocating." He did not let me out. Then I begged, "Oh God, take me out of this hell fast. I promise that I will remember your name constantly." God took two hundred and eighty days to answer my prayer, and then I came out.

As soon as I began to breathe through my nose, my mother began to shower kisses on me, like a dog licking her pup. This is the *samskara* that our parents give us. We in turn do the same to our children. Let us now tell the next generation to give detached love to their children, as in the cinema, and true love to God. One has to put on an act. If Lord Rama and Sri Krishna did it, why can't you? The acts that they put on were *lilas*. You can also perform a *lila*. There is no harm in kissing a child. If the child wants you to stroke his hair, it is all right to do so, but keep your heart separate. In one of his poems, Wazind says:

*Having obtained this beautiful body, love Rama.
Why be greedy in vain for property and wealth?
O unconscious, inattentive fool, be conscious
Of what saints and wise men understand and teach.*

*See within yourself – who belongs to you?
No one accompanies you at death, you are alone.
Look at your attachment to body, wealth and wife.
Unless you remember Rama's name night and day,
Then what can you say you have done in this life?*

We are ultimately related to God and not to anybody else. My ultimate relationship is with God, not with my parents or anybody else. I am nobody's son, nobody's father, nobody's brother. I am only God's servant. This is the only truth there is in life. The day this truth enters your life there will be nothing but bliss. Then no matter what assails you, nothing will affect your life. Adi Shankaracharya says:

*Who are you? Who am I? Where have we come from?
Who is my mother and who is my father?
Think over these questions again and again.
This world is all without substance,
Like thoughts in a dream,
So leave it all and search for the reality.*

*The same Vishnu is in you, in me, in everything.
Why be intolerant and angry with others?
Seeing yourself in everybody everywhere,
Abandon the differentiating attitude.
Be equal-minded with friend or foe, son or relative.
Do not try to be united or separate.*

*If you wish to attain the darshan of Lord Vishnu,
Sing Bhagavad Gita and the names of the Lord,
Meditate on the form of the Lord continuously,
Always remain in the company of great souls
And offer wealth, solace and support to the poor.*

After boarding the train put the trunk that you were carrying on your head down in a corner and go off to sleep. The train will take both you and the trunk to your destination. Similarly, in the *Vinaya Patrika*, Tulsidas says:

*O my master, I have surrendered
All the burdens of life into your hands.
Now my upliftment or downfall is in your hands.*

I am only interested in one thing and that is my relationship with God. I believe that mankind must learn this first.

What is the spiritual duty of parents towards their children?

When children are born it is the parents' duty to initiate them into spiritual life, not into religion. Your child is an experiment. It is good to have a child. Why not? There is no harm in having a relationship and producing children, but the children should not be the joy of your lower soul. Every child that a mother produces is a divine incarnation, a product of God, a creation of God. Parents should treat that creation of God as an experiment.

How will that child become a great man? Great men are not made in schools and colleges. In a college one can become an arts graduate, a lawyer or a professor. That is also necessary, but to become a great man the child must have a personality of substance which is his own. A child who constantly receives the love of his parents, who never looks for love in himself, who never looks for bliss in himself, who always trails behind his parents, whining like a pup, will not have a strong personality.

You must have heard of Chhatrapati Shivaji and how his mother Jija Bai used to train him. How did Maharana Pratap become a great military leader? His actions reflected his personality. Just as a carpenter takes a log of wood, hacks it, saws it, files it, carves it and makes a beautiful piece of furniture; just as a tailor takes a roll of cloth, cuts it, sews it and makes a fashionable designer dress; just as a sculptor takes a piece of rock and hammers, chisels and carves it into a beautiful statue of Sri Rama, Sri Krishna or Mahavir, parents have to be sculptors and artists with their children.

Nagging your children all the time to study and be good will make parrots out of them. Parents want their children to boost up their egos. Their children should not bring disrepute to their name or give people cause to point a finger at them. A child is before you. How do you make him or her into a work of art? Chisel him, chisel her. A beautiful statue lies hidden within the rough stone. God has produced that raw material which is before you. Now make it into a work of art.

Don't impose your weaknesses on your children. Christ did not go to college, nor did Mohammed. I don't know about Buddha, but I have never heard that he went to a gurukul. And I know definitely that Swami Niranjan never attended school in his life. He only saw a school when he went to teach yoga. Swami Niranjan's first assignment was Northern Ireland when he was ten years old. I took him there and on the way the plane first stopped in Tehran. I went to the bathroom and when I came out Swami Niranjan was fighting with somebody. He was a very naughty boy, always playing tricks on everyone. He would even pull somebody's dhoti off from behind and run away with it.

Swami Niranjan was fighting with a tall Iranian man. The Iranian asked him, "Which God do you believe in?" Swami Niranjan replied, "I don't believe in God, I am an atheist." He used to say this openly. That must have started the fight. I said, "What's going on?" The man said, "This boy doesn't believe in God. He is a kafir and should be killed." I realized that I was in a Muslim country and would have to reply carefully. So, I used my brain quickly and said, "Yes, that's right. He doesn't believe in God because God is Christian. He believes in Khuda, Allah". The Iranian became absolutely quiet!

I took Swami Niranjan to Belfast in Northern Ireland. He used to teach yoga in a Catholic school. When he came out, the Protestant boys would threaten him, saying, "Why do you go to the Catholic school? Don't go there!" He would say, "I have to teach yoga." They would reply, "Come

to our school and teach us.” So the next day he would go to the Protestant school and on the way the Catholic boys would threaten him, saying “Why are you going to that Protestant school?”

Northern Ireland was a great problem. The Protestants would say to the swamis, “Don’t stay here, this is a Catholic area. Come and stay in our area.” If the swamis went to the Protestant area, the Catholics would say, “No, no, you must come to our area.” If the swamis didn’t go to that area, the windows would be broken. Every now and then they would break the windows and in an hour the room would become very cold. The City Corporation would have to be informed and then the swamis moved to a safe place while the windows were repaired.

Northern Ireland is not like India where the Hindus and Muslims are comparatively cordial to each other. The situation in Northern Ireland is a very difficult one. Northern Ireland was Swami Niranjan’s first assignment, where he had to live like the tongue between two sets of teeth! There he learnt how to live life, what to expect from life and how to conduct himself if he expected to be successful in life. Every morning there was graffiti on his door: “Yogi bear lives here. Yogi bear has no hair.” He was ten years old and had never been to school. Neither Swami Niranjan nor Christ went to school.

Christ was the son of a carpenter. Mohammed used to look after the roadside inns, the *dhabas*, the places where caravans would rest for the night during their journey. He was a very ordinary man, but enlightenment can come to anyone. Mohammed’s mother must have given him very good karmas and samskaras. Mary was pregnant before marriage. You may take it whichever way you want to. You may say she had an immaculate conception or you may have some other interpretation. I accept both. In any case, Christ was a genius, there is no doubt about it, and Buddha was as well. Of course, it was known before Buddha’s birth; there were clear signals that his mother was going to give

birth to a great son who would be filled with love and compassion.

We have understood what you are saying, but how many of us will be able to follow it? We will forget half of it as soon as we leave.

Vyasa Dev also made this point in the *Mahabharata*. He wrote the entire story of the Kauravas and Pandavas, then in the last verse he wrote, “With both hands raised I say that only the path of dharma brings prosperity, well-being and auspiciousness, but no one listens.”

Walking the path of dharma is painful and so people avoid it. There is pain in adharma as well. If you steal there will be tension and suffering. If you get caught, you will go to prison. So there is suffering in dharma as well as adharma. The reason why people do not walk the path of dharma is because it goes against their *swabhava*, their nature. A pig which is used to eating excreta will not appreciate a bowl of halwa. A dog will prefer raw meat to fine kheer. That is because of their swabhava. Every individual has his own nature and performs his karmas accordingly. If the nature of the individual evolves, his karmas also evolve. Surdas has aptly explained the nature of swabhava:

*O mind, do away with the company
Of those who are averse to Hari,
With whom stupidity is generated
And divine supplication is disturbed.
Even if a serpent is fed with milk,
It cannot abandon its poison.
Similarly, if a crow is given camphor,
A dog is bathed in the water of Ganga,
A donkey is smeared with perfume,
Or a monkey is decorated with ornaments,
Their essential nature remains the same.
An elephant bathes in a river
And again puts dirt on his head.*

*Although you exhaust your quiver,
The arrows can never pierce the stone.
Surdas says that another colour
Cannot be applied to a black blanket.*

Can one try to change one's swabhava?

No. Man may change his karma but to change his nature or personality is nearly an impossible task. The word *swa* means 'one's own' and *bhava* means 'way of thinking or feeling'. Swabhava is your way of thinking, your personality, your nature, which comes from your past life. For example, if you sow paddy seeds, you get more paddy because it is the swabhava of paddy to beget paddy. What variety of paddy you get is a different issue. Man may change his karmas, but his swabhava will change only if he encounters a drastic situation in life, like the circumstances which presented themselves before King Bhartrihari.

You may know this story. A situation arose which shocked and hurt Bhartrihari so much that he instantly walked out of his palace. There have been many such incidents when people received a sudden blow which changed their entire swabhava. He wrote of this in the *Bhartrihari Shataka*:

*The lady whom I was thinking about day and night
Has no attachment and no loyalty to me.
She prefers the company of another,
And he, in turn, also turns his eye to another.
That lady was never interested in me.
Fie on that lady, fie on her lover.
Shame to cupid, shame to the lady and to me.*

Ratnakar, the dacoit, used to rob and murder travellers. Once he accosted a group of sadhus and began to rob them. Now sadhus are very slippery because of their all round experience in life. One of them said to Ratnakar, "Why are you doing this? Aren't you bothered about the karma you are acquiring?" Ratnakar replied. "I am doing this for my parents who need to be looked after." The sadhu said, "If

you are doing all this for them, you should at least ask them first whether they will share the punishment of this karma with you.”

Ratnakar went home and said to his father, “I steal, rob and murder for your sake. Will you share the punishment of these bad deeds with me?” His father refused point blank. “Why should I share the results of your bad deeds? You rob and murder, so you suffer the punishment.” This opened Ratnakar’s eyes. He gave up being a dacoit and became the sadhu’s disciple. The sadhu gave him the mantra *Mara*, meaning dead. While chanting this mantra continuously, however, it became *Rama*, and thus Ratnakar became Valmiki. That strange and drastic event turned him from a robber and murderer into a saint. It has also been said:

*By repeating the name of the Lord,
Although in reverse order,
Valmiki became like Brahma
Which is known to all the world.*

When such an event takes place in your life you get a jolt and your entire personality is overhauled. Otherwise changing the personality is not possible. Your personality comes to you from a previous birth; that is the seed of your past life. It can change only through *vairagya*, dispassion, if somehow the veil of *maya* is lifted and suddenly you realize, “Oh, I have been such a fool! What was I doing until now?” When this transformation takes place in your life, it is called *vairagya*.

At such a moment, all of your values are turned upside down. Sometimes you may think that the world has deceived you, but the earlier this happens in life, the better. If you realize at the age of fifty or fifty-five that the world has deceived you, your *swabhava*, your personality may change, however you may not be able to adjust to this new perception of the world. After all, you have turned grey, you have already received the first letter from Yamaraj, the Lord of death, and are awaiting the second. The third letter

may also be just around the corner along with the warrant. Therefore, you should reconsider what you expect from the world and what the world expects from you early on in life, before you are twenty or twenty-five, long before you are married.

What do you expect from me? After all, I am not prepared to serve you. I am not obliged to serve anyone, not even my parents. When I left home to take sannyasa, I told my father, "I have no obligation towards you. If there was any obligation, that should have been understood before I was born. However, that was not the case. You gave birth to me because you had no choice. You and my mother united and I was born. Did you follow the dharma of a father? And now you ask me to follow the dharma of a son? I was a biological accident. If you want to be served by a son, then you must produce another son. Hopefully he will be foolish enough to spend his life serving you. Each man brings with him his share of karmas. I am going to take sannyasa."

Isn't it true that the shastras say if the child is born through a sankalpa, a resolve, then he must fulfil it.

Yes, this is written in the shastras, but who goes in for such a sankalpa! When a man is before a woman, all sankalpas vanish into thin air. One in a million may be capable of remembering it. I can tell you clearly that it is not possible to keep the sankalpa. Even yogis of the tantric path are overcome with weakness at that point. Even those who have perfected vajroli mudra and have perfect control over discharge of semen become weak. The sexual drive is extremely formidable, though not unconquerable. Therefore, it is said that woman is the enchanting delusion of the world.

Could the fact that you have reached such an evolved spiritual state be due to the sankalpa of your parents?

I am the product of my guru, not of my parents. My body may be a genetic transfer from my parents, but my spirituality is not. In this poem Kabir has said:

*My guru taught me the secret of penetration.
First, bring alms of grain,
But don't go to any town or village.
Do not bring from any Hindu or Muslim,
But make sure your bag is full.*

*Second, bring alms of flesh,
But do not go to any living being.
Do not bring anything which is dead or alive,
But make sure the skull bowl is full.*

*Third, bring alms of water,
But do not go to any well or river.
Do not bring from small or large ponds either,
But fill the gourd pot full.*

*Fourth, bring alms of wood,
But do not go to a tree of any kind.
Bring wood which is neither wet nor dry,
But bring a full bundle.*

*Kabir says to the wise,
That this poem is the giver of salvation.
Only he who is most intelligent,
Can understand its meaning.*

My guru taught me how to shoot the arrow straight at the target. Without the guru, knowledge is not realized. In the *Ramacharitamanas* Tulsidas asked, "Is true knowledge possible without a guru? Is true knowledge possible without detachment?" The guru is light himself. The word *guru* means 'dispeller of darkness'. It has also been rightly said by Kabir Das:

*First of all I followed the Vedas and society,
But I happened to meet a true Guru in the front-force
Who placed a torchlight in my hand.*

Do you believe you have become a great sannyasin because it was your destiny, or because your guru wanted it, or because you prayed to God for it?

No, my raw material was right for making a good statue of a sannyasin, so my guru carved it. It was a good piece of stone. In this regard, Kabir has said:

*All the saints know the difference
Between the guru and a touchstone.
The touchstone turns iron into gold,
A true guru makes a disciple in his own image.*

Nowadays we are flooded with gurus. How should one go about searching for one? How does one know whom to accept?

When searching for a bridegroom for your daughter, you look for thirty-six qualities in the boy. In the same way, you have to search for certain qualities in the guru. The foremost quality is that he possesses not only scriptural knowledge but also experiential knowledge. Knowledge is of two types, scriptural and experiential. The two are as far apart as reading about the life of a householder and actually being a householder!

There are many qualities to look for in a guru, of which I will enumerate a few. The guru is one who has acquired knowledge through experience, who has seen the world. The guru is one who has had some experience with God and can explain these things. The guru is one who is balanced and has control over himself. The guru is one who is not interested in cheating, and for whom gurudom is not a career, a profession or a source of employment.

Such gurus exist, it is not that they are unavailable. However, one must be very careful when selecting a guru, just as during the monsoon one filters water before drinking it. In this monsoon age, society is flooded with gurus. Therefore, filter the water before drinking it. As Kabir Das has said:

*Gurus have become very cheap now.
For a pittance you can buy fifty.
They sell the wealth of the name of Rama
And depend on their disciples for support.*

Secondly, according to the sannyasa tradition, all gurus, whether Vaishnava, Shaiva or Udasi, are of two kinds, depending upon their initiation. One type has received initiation directly from the akhara and the other from the mandali. For example, the disciples whom I had initiated would be known as sannyasins of a mandali. One would be known as a sannyasin of the akhara only if one has received initiation directly from the akhara. Initiations from an akhara or a mandali are more reliable. My guru, Swami Sivananda, was initiated by his guru in the Niranjani Akhara. However, I was not initiated in the akhara. I have accepted sannyasa from an extremely renounced sannyasin of the akhara and, therefore, I belong to the Niranjani Akhara, but I am a sannyasin of the mandali. It is a reliable source.

Sannyasins belonging to the akhara need to act in a very correct manner. In the akhara, those who discredit the tradition are beaten up mercilessly. Naga sadhus may even beat a defaulter to death with the *chimta*, tongs. Such things happen in our tradition. Nowadays, however, sadhus are not interested in attaching themselves to any tradition. They operate independently according to their whims and fancies, without commitment to any tradition. Whenever they feel like it they discard their clothes, shave their heads, add 'swami' or 'panditji' to their names, develop a superficial knowledge of astrology or ayurveda, and then hook some gullible person. So one must be very alert. In this regard Kabir says:

*Without availing of the true guru,
Their learning and experience incomplete,
At present in the guise of a sadhu,
They beg from door to door.*

The guru tradition exists in every sect, among the Vaishnavas, Ramanandis, Ramanujas, Udasis, Buddhists and all others. Jains also have this tradition among the Svetambaras and Digambaras. There is no harm in being initiated according to the tradition. In this day and age, there are some gurus who may cheat, but the majority are not frauds. Honesty has not yet taken a back seat. It is idealistic to expect that only saints sit under the huge banyan tree. Dacoits may come and sit there too, just as destructive elements also found shelter under the shade of Gandhiji's huge tree. This happens because the destructive elements have an opportunity to breed there. The banyan tree gives shelter to all.

That is why in every situation which promotes truth and dharma, you will come across such elements. This world is a mixed bag; everything is a combination of good and bad. Just as a bird or an ant takes the sugar and leaves behind the sand, just as a swan drinks milk and leaves behind water, so one should use one's *viveka*, discrimination, and search for a true guru. A guru is necessary for satsang, the company of truth. It is not possible to deal with spiritual life without satsang because there are many nuts and bolts to be adjusted. You cannot always be sure how much each one needs to be tightened. When you sit down with your guru, he can tell you exactly how to adjust each nut, bolt and screw. This is very important and, therefore, a guru is a must.

There are certainly very good gurus. I am not pessimistic about it. If I make a mistake should I think, "Oh my God! I can't survive!" India completely rejected Acharya Rajneesh. Foreigners used to go to Pune and many of them also come here to Deoghar. Do the foreigners who come here take their wife out on the streets and kiss her in public? No, because I don't teach them to do that. I teach people to lead a proper life, whereas in Pune, the people were taught to live in a radical manner and so the situation there became very difficult.

Gurus must teach principles which are neither fanatic nor lunatic, but intimately and immediately related to the divine.

You cannot deny God, it is impossible. You may not be able to prove His existence but you cannot deny it. Therefore, our speech, our relationships, our meetings, our discussions should always begin with God. First, we utter God's name and then we utter whatever else needs to be discussed.

God created this world and man. Why did he create all the negative feelings within man such as his desire to kill or to cut someone's throat?

You have asked a very good question. If only God had made the rose without thorns, it would have been nice. He created guava and papaya, but why did he create the bitter neem? I remember a line written by Mirza Ghalib – *Gule bekhar khuja ast?* *Gul* means 'flower', *bekhar* means 'without thorns', *khuja ast* means 'where is it'. Where can you find roses without thorns? What is the basis of this strange world of God? Where there is light there is also darkness. Where does the shadow reside? Where there is light! If there is no light, there can be no shadow.

Similarly, where there is virtue, vice is sure to exist. Vice is the shadow of virtue. Evil exists to highlight the greatness of good. Make sure that you understand this or else you will hate anything that is negative or bad. We hate thieves and robbers and put them behind bars, thus ensuring that they become double crooks, then release them. Good and evil exist in this world in order to balance each other. If everyone becomes good in your house, there will be no fun in life. You cannot enjoy life in the absence of the devil. That is why God created the devil.

If your son is good, your daughter is good, your wife is nice, your husband is nice, your father is good, your mother is nice, the house is beautiful and there is plenty of money, then your life becomes monotonous. There needs to be a contrast. The devil is the contrast to the divine and that is why God created the devil. The devil has been created to highlight the glory of the divine. If there were no devil, who would glorify the divine? Who would then sing the praises of

the divine? It has been beautifully stated in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

*The creator created both good and bad,
But the Vedas separated the objects of creation
According to their qualities.
Thus originated affluence and adversity,
Vice and virtue, day and night,
Saint and villain, good and bad.
The creator made beings animate and inanimate,
Of all qualities, both good and bad.
Saints, like the swan, have the capacity
To extract the good from the bad.
From a mixture of milk and water,
The swan takes out the milk and leaves the water.
Similarly, the saints are able to take the good
And leave out the bad from a mixture of both.*

Everywhere in life you find this polarity, this duality. That is why happiness and sorrow, good and evil, day and night, civilized and uncivilized, saintly and unsaintly exist everywhere side by side. This is a world of contrasts. God did not make it this way; it came into existence by itself. Where He made light, shadows appeared. Birth came and along with it death. He made happiness and along with it came sorrow. All this happens by itself.

Swamiji, will you ever return to Munger?

I have left Munger now and settled here. This is my airport. My aircraft will fly away from here. I have not come here from my own desire; I was asked to come. The villagers have accepted me with love. There are no mosquitoes here. It is very peaceful. At night you can experience absolute silence and stillness. There is very little electricity and it is disconnected at night. Everyone is asleep by eight o'clock.

I left home and never turned back. I left my guru's ashram and never went back. I left Munger and never went back. One day I shall leave this place and never come back.

I do not have the habit of going back. I have never practised looking back. What is the use of looking back? How many times have I been born? How many parents have I had? How many times have I enjoyed pleasure and borne sorrow? How many friends and enemies have I had? Where are they now? Whom should I search for? Even in this birth how many friends have I had? Where have they all gone?

Life is transitory. You have to forget the past. If you don't, then eventually one day everything will be sealed in a crypt by itself. Sometimes when you have a deep connection with someone, it manifests again in a later birth in some form and a little bit of interaction takes place. Apart from this, no one is related to anyone in this world. We come with a gust of wind, meet on a shore and then separate to go our own ways. We are all guided by the winds of karma. Therefore, I have maintained a steady attitude in life. I accept the fact that people meet me and then go away. A sadhu is nobody's friend. When offered a smoke, he shares a puff and then slips away. The *Srimad Bhagavata* says:

*The assembly of sons, wife and other relations
Is like the assembly of travellers at the well.
After leaving their bodies they all separate,
Just as the dream ends upon awakening from sleep.*

Even a donkey leaves his footprints behind. Yes, a guru is a donkey and the disciple is a dog. Their natures are akin to the donkey and the dog. The donkey leaves footprints behind. I am also leaving behind an impression or two. They are memories, footprints in the sands of time.

Why is the guru like a donkey and the disciple like a dog?

Even if you twist the donkey's tail, he will not move unless he wants to. He will always act of his own free will, never according to your wish. If the donkey stops, he stops and he moves only when he feels like moving. You may beat him, break his legs, wrench off his tail, but the donkey will remain obstinate and immovable. He will move at his own

discretion, just like a guru. The disciple always wags his tail and demands love. He licks and smells the guru, and remains constantly in his service. He is loyal to his guru, just like a dog. Kabir has quite aptly said:

*Kabir is the dog of Rama, his name being 'pearl'.
He goes where the rope of Rama's name draws him.*

Please tell us something about Swami Sivanandaji.

Oh, but I have been speaking about Sivanandaji. You see, I am his image. He always spoke in the same way. Swami Sivananda's life was full of incidents. I remember them, but there are so many. Swamiji's life was very different from most of the sannyasins I have come across. His heart was very large. He was happiest when he was feeding and giving to people. His only philosophy in life was: God's name is real and everything else is unreal.

Swami Sivananda said, "Whenever you start an ashram or any such project, you should begin with God's name." So, he started unbroken Ram Naam samkirtan, which was sung every day continuously for twenty-four hours: Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare. It was our duty to sing for one hour daily. A small temple with a hall was constructed for this purpose and two lamps were lit.

Swami Sivananda was a lover of Rama's name. He was also a devotee of kirtan. He sang very well. Swamiji's voice was very sweet and very powerful. He used to compose songs in English, Hindi, Tamil and Sanskrit. He compiled a book called *Inspiring Songs and Kirtans* in English. He often would sing in English. His first question to anyone who came to meet him was, "Can you sing? Can you dance? Okay, let's have a performance this evening." He loved music and classical dance. Musicians from North and South India used to come to him.

Swamiji was the first sannyasin in India to initiate girls into sannyasa. Before him, no one ever initiated girls into

sannyasa because they were afraid of public opinion. I followed his example and gave sannyasa to girls without any hesitation. Marriage may be good but sannyasa is even better, particularly in this age when the country's population has shot up to nine hundred and ten million. If more people took sannyasa, the population would be reduced to nine hundred million, and then eight hundred and ninety million after a while. The population growth rate would fall and that would be good for the country.

The more people who take up sannyasa, the fewer unemployed there would be also. Would you call me unemployed? Are any of my sannyasins unemployed? None are unemployed. We are not unemployed because all we need is two rotis. The unemployed are those who need a job, money, a bonus, a daily allowance, a pension, a gratuity and a rented house. They need to be able to feed their kids, they need a heater, a cooler, a bicycle, a motorcycle and a TV. I have no such needs. If I get them, that's fine; if not, it doesn't matter. Luxury is neither my need nor my want. This is the attitude of a sannyasin.

Can everyone live with this attitude?

Yes, everyone can. King Janaka had the same attitude and he lived with it. Many people have exemplified this attitude in their lives. Mahatma Gandhi lived the life of a sannyasin. I lived with him for three months in his ashram. I have seen his personal life. A householder can live the life of a sannyasin. A powerful politician can live the life of a sannyasin. Mahatma Gandhi was a very busy man, but he used to clean his toilet himself. He used to clean his plate himself. He used to wash his dhoti himself. He used to draw the water himself. He used to feed his goat himself. He used to weave his dhoti himself. He did all this and he was such a busy man.

Ultimately, the whole nation looked to Mahatma Gandhi for guidance, because the Indian people always thought that everything should be achieved by non-violent means. There is no use in fighting and quarrelling, as is happening in Bosnia,

Rwanda or Afghanistan. The means must justify the end. If you want freedom, obtain it through non-violent means, through friendship, through conviction and convincing others. In India, when we were convinced that Mahatma Gandhi had that philosophy, we accepted him as our leader. He was also capable of utilizing it. We still believe in his philosophy. I still believe in Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy out and out. He was the right person to lead the country.

It was Mahatma Gandhi who brought freedom to India, nobody else, not the people who were fighting, shooting and putting bombs in assembly halls. Of course, today we worship those revolutionaries because they were martyrs, and so they are glorified. This is politics. But Gandhiji always lived like a yogi, like a sannyasin. He was open minded. When he went to his wife in the night, next day he would write in the *Harijan* newspaper, "I am a very weak man. I made an oath, a *sankalpa*, not to touch my wife because I wanted to practise brahmacharya, but last night I could not control my desire and went to her room. She closed the door from the inside." This was printed in the newspaper. A truthful man has nothing to hide from people. If you don't like it, I don't care! Truth always remains truth.

How can mantra be perfected?

Mantra is perfected through japa. Regular *purashcharana*, mantra sadhana, helps one perfect a mantra. There are various regulations for different types of japa; there is no common rule for perfecting a mantra. The rules vary according to the mantra and the objective behind the japa. Some mantras are used for the attainment of specific desires and others are general. Mantras may be tamasic, rajasic or sattwic, for the fulfilment of tamasic, rajasic or sattwic desires.

How did you conceive this idea of helping the people of this area?

It is not an idea; it was an order and I heard it! In 1992, I took a *sankalpa* to complete ten million and eight hundred

thousand mantras, which means that at the rate of ten to twelve hours a day, it would take me three hundred days, almost a year. It was a lovely year. That year I did not meet anyone; I was in total seclusion and isolation. I used to sit in the Akhara and do my mantra. Some time after I had completed the mantra purashcharana I heard clearly, "Love thy neighbours as I have loved you. Provide them with the same facilities as I have provided for you." The next day I spoke to Swami Satsangi. She had received the same idea. Then she spoke to Swami Vedananda, a German swami, who also had the same idea, almost simultaneously!

Now Swami Satsangi is a very rich lady; one could say she is a millionaire. She belongs to a very affluent family. One or two million rupees is nothing for her. She had all her assets transferred to Sivananda Math. Swami Vedananda wrote to his mother in Germany and she transferred a lot of money to Sivananda Math on his behalf. Many swamis also did the same thing. Within ten to fifteen days the swamis collected many hundreds of thousands of rupees. Our swamis are quite rich, we are not destitute. We are resourceful people. Our swamis do not need to live on alms. If need be, we can drive taxis and earn money. I also know all the ways. I never have any problem with money.

A few days before all this happened, a lady from the neighbourhood had come asking for five or six hundred rupees. Her house had burned down and she wanted some relief. I said, "No, we will not give cash. After the rains are over we will build a house for her." Her house was the first one we constructed. Her family are cobblers by caste. Then the second, third and fourth houses were constructed.

In the meantime our sannyasins here have been trained. A swami from Orissa builds the houses. Another swami from France knows how to make bricks and is in charge of the brick kiln. We produce hundreds of thousands of bricks here, for which we get coal from Dhanbad. The government has permitted us to collect all the sand that we need for our work. We have been provided with a lorry and a tractor and

we pick up sand from the river bed. We make the bricks here and get the thatch from Munger district. There are good engineers in Deoghar who provide us with free designs for rural housing.

The villagers have different needs to townsfolk. They need more space; a flat is not adequate. In the towns and cities two rooms are enough for a family and a bathroom is a necessity. However, for the villagers, a bathroom is not very necessary, but space for cattle, a kitchen and a separate sleeping area for the older family members are a must. We have made Raghunath Kutir as the prototype to show people what we are giving them. It has two rooms and four verandahs, so that the villagers can keep their hay, fodder, firewood and cattle in the house and also sleep inside it. I don't have to go anywhere to explain things to people.

Once every year, on the 8th of September, the birthday of my guru, Swami Sivananda, I create a permanent business for one family. I help them to start a small shop with an investment of four, five or six thousand rupees. I used to do this in Munger, too. I had a list of names of people in need of help. I would call them on the 8th of September and ask them to open a shop to sell cosmetics, bangles and so on. I would finance it.

This year I gave assistance to a lady whose husband is dead. He used to make bricks for our building project. They are Muslims. I gave her seven hundred rupees and sent her with someone to Mohanpur. She bought bangles and sold them for a profit. Now she goes from house to house, sells bangles and saves the profit. If seven hundred rupees can provide employment and sustenance to someone needy, then isn't it a beautiful idea? This can be done through ashrams in every state and district. If the sadhus of India were a little more aware, they could do a lot of work. But such work should only be done through personal experience and realization. No one can be forced and no one can be told to do something.

There are other things to bear in mind. Good work also requires effort, imagination and planning. Even as bad

work needs planning and effort, good work needs more planning and more hard work. To take on four houses at one time is not easy. I have enough resources to make about two hundred houses in a month. Sivananda Math is the institution which does this work, not Bihar School of Yoga. I have two wings: Bihar School of Yoga is one wing and Sivananda Math is another. They are my wings, right and left. The Bihar School of Yoga spreads God's name through meditation, concentration, yogasanas, pranayama, mudra and bandha. Sivananda Math spreads God's name through selfless service. Both wings are necessary and must be steady. These wings are both very useful, very rich institutions; they are not your average institutions.

However, they need dedicated and imaginative staff. During the construction of Tribhuvan, this three-storey building, an Australian swami, Nirmalratna, would stand there day and night supervising. Once she got dehydrated, once she had conjunctivitis, but she stood by it. Swami Atmamuktananda drives the truck or tractor and brings sand from the river bed. Here ladies operate everything; they are trained for every work. I told them, "If you want to serve in any capacity, I have faith in you." I have no definition of right or wrong, good or bad. If you work for the good of others, therein lies your goodness.

Our ladies can go anywhere by day or night. I do not need to watch over them. Whatever they do is their responsibility. When the French swami went to Patna, initially I sent someone with her for security. She is a pretty girl; anyone could fall for her. Now she goes alone. Until and unless I have faith in her, she cannot develop a strong character. In the same way, parents should put trust in their children. Only then will the children develop character. Women here drive the tractor to plough fields even thirty miles away. Women do everything here. There is no distinction between man and woman.

This year we ploughed about one hundred to one hundred and fifty acres of land because many people here do

not have a pair of oxen. One person has an ox and another person has another ox. By the time people pair up the oxen and plough each other's fields by turns, the position of the planets has changed and it is no longer auspicious to sow seeds. This year, as the planets moved into position, the swamis gathered the people of the village together. I asked them to do an efficient job with the tractor. They left at six in the morning and ploughed all day. In the evening, when they returned covered in wet mud, I asked them how they felt. "Contented," they replied. They find contentment in service to others.

When you serve others you feel satisfaction, you sleep well, you have good thoughts, good feelings and a good mental state. What more do you want? It is a pleasure which cannot be explained or expressed. When you do good to others, when you work for others and not for yourself, it brings immense joy, which is called *ananda*, bliss. About the necessity of supporting others, Bhartrihari says:

*Sheshnag carries the whole load
Of the universe on his hood alone.
But Sheshnag himself is supported
On the back of Koorma, a gigantic tortoise.
Koorma himself in turn is supported
With respect, on the lap of the ocean.
How peculiar it looks
That all the great forces of Nature
Are supported by others.*

If you only live for yourself and your family, you cannot be happy. You and your family are just nothing in this universe. When you and your family live for others, only then does your life have meaning. And when you live only for others, you are really great. God will definitely shower his blessings and grace on you. *Paropakaraaya sataam vibhootaya* – "the virtues of the noble and great are for the good of others." Trees don't eat their fruit. Does an apple tree eat its own apples? Do rivers drink their own water?

That is called doing good to others, without expectation. If your mind is patterned along that line, then every meditation leads to greater harmony. Every meditation will give you blessings. Otherwise you smell like a toilet. You can put on perfume and smell nice outside, but underneath there is the smell of a toilet. With a selfish, limited, crooked mind, you are trying to smell better by putting on artificial perfumes. However, this will not work until you have shaped your life in the mould of charity, as far as possible.

At present you have the opportunity. Swami Satyananda, who has spread yoga throughout the world, will get the work done. But I will not do it myself. My business is with God. However, it is my duty to inspire you all. The resources and the workers are here, but the problem is *Ayam nijah, paroveti* – “This is mine, that is his.” Those people who think like this have narrow minds.

Gananaa laghu chetasaam, udaar charitanaam tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam – “For people with large hearts the whole world is one family.” So, love your neighbour, love the whole world as I have loved you. Help them as I have helped you. What is the definition of a neighbour? The whole world is a neighbourhood, especially when you can leave Delhi in the morning at four o’clock and reach London in the evening! In four or six hours you can go from one corner of the world to the other. Previously it took the same time to go to Bhagalpur.

Satsang 24

2 December 1994

The culture which fights wins. The English have imposed their language all over the world. They have completely changed your dining rooms, your toilets, your bedrooms, your dress, your hair. Look at the size of the United Kingdom and see how it ruled over the world! One who does not accept challenges is not a human being. Man must definitely look for peace, but he should also learn to live amidst hardship. He may desire to sleep on a soft, comfortable bed, but he must also be able to sleep on a jute mat. He may enjoy eating puris and pakoras if they are offered to him, but he must also be able to eat dry chapatis.

A comfortable life is no life at all. When you reach my age there is satisfaction in a life full of challenges, demands, toil, rejoicing and sorrow. Today, when I look at my life of seventy years, I am happy that I have lived my own life, followed the laws of nature and faced every drive. There are many drives in life, not just one, but many people do not know how to face those drives. They surrender completely and just drown. It is far better to fight the waves and survive. If you die fighting, so much the better, and if you live, congratulations! There are so many drives in life. Either you do not know what those drives are or you try to fulfil them through means which cannot fulfil them. Society has prescribed certain methods but they are inadequate.

The shastras say that there are three main drives in life: *vittaishana*, the desire for wealth, *daraishana*, the desire for sex, and *putraishana*, the desire for progeny. These are the normal drives. Apart from these, they say a few people also have a fourth drive, *lokaishana*, the desire to be famous, to be immortal, to rule the kingdom, to be the victor or conqueror, as Alexander the Great was. This fourth drive is not present in everyone. Vittaishana is the drive for prosperity, riches, property, a bungalow, a car, paise. Daraishana, the sexual drive, is very important and it cannot be ignored. It is a natural drive and all-pervading. You will find that drive in every living being, not only in human beings or animals or birds. Putraishana is the desire to reproduce, to have children – “May my tribe increase, may I have many disciples.”

How do you manage these three drives? Either you say, “I have fulfilled them in my previous life”, or “I am fulfilling them now”, or “I want to fulfil them but cannot do so.” These drives are the challenges in life. On the spiritual path they come like barriers to block the road. “Stop”, they say and ask you to pay a toll. These three desires are the tolls to be paid at the check points. Pay them and then go ahead. A good guru will show you the way. My guru showed me how to shoot the arrow so that it hit the bull’s eye. I have crossed those check points. I did not pay much tax either, I smooth-talked my way through. I have no more taxes to pay. I only have to walk a little bit now.

Youth does not come again and again. The things you can do while you are young, you cannot do in later years. However, there is one fault with youth – it is obstinate and adamant, it has its own way of thinking. If a young person is apprehensive about carrying a load on his back, shame on his youth! It is understandable if someone of my age avoids stress because he may develop blood pressure, have a heart attack or suffer from some other ailment. Stress in youth, however, is a blessing in life. This is true, I am not joking. Stress is necessary for life. Stress is created by certain

conditions in life which are necessary for growth. If there were no stress, there would be no growth. In friction there are always two opposing forces in play. When there is friction, there is movement and then progress. There is no progress without friction. This is the reality of life.

I gave up journalism for personal reasons. Now I feel that opportunity has passed me by. What can I do about this?

Luck and chance are nothing but the right and proper use of opportunities which come in the way of every person. Golden opportunities come in everyone's life at some point or the other, even if only for a short time. No man has been born without these opportunities. He who understands this and makes the best use of them can become a good athlete, a great scholar or a famous soldier. He can change his destiny. This is relevant to everybody, not just you. I am speaking to everybody through you.

About fifty years ago, in 1944 or 1945, a boy came to Rishikesh from Punjab. He was a tuberculosis patient. He sang well and I learnt quite a lot of music from him. He was tired of life. Swami Sivananda was his guru. Swamiji told him just one thing, "Look, you sing very well. You have a good voice and everybody loves music. Make a career out of music. Teach music to people and sustain yourself with the money you earn." This was the advice Swamiji gave him. He was a very good teacher. He went away and became a good music producer in the film industry. His name was Jayadev. Now he is no longer alive. Although he was well-educated, jobs were difficult to obtain, even then. Times are no better now than they were in the past. Sometimes he used to meet up with me, but gradually we drifted far apart. He went into the film industry in Bombay and I came into this film industry. After all, this can also be considered as a film industry.

There was a Bengali family in Calcutta which accepted Christianity as its religion. The man went to Italy, married there and had children. Now he is a 'pucca' disciple of mine. His name is Anusandhana and his wife's name is Uttarkashi.

His sons are named Jagannath, Ganesha and Sri Krishna. He writes three letters or more per month which he faxes to me. Bholenath's birthday is coming up and a fax of congratulations will arrive.

He lives in a city named Florence, which the Italians pronounce 'Firenze'. Florence is the art capital of Italy, a hotbed of painters, musicians and artists of all kinds. It is the Gangotri of artists. Michelangelo, who painted the dome of St Peter's Basilica in Rome, was from Florence. He lay on wooden planks near the ceiling and painted; it is a wonderful work and the whole world knows him for that. It was his sadhana. Florence is an extremely beautiful city. The people who live there are very emotional and talk of literature, music and art all the time. The identity of a human being lies in his knowledge and love of literature, music and art. In the absence of these, man is an animal with two horns and a tail.

What is your view on alternative therapies?

There are so many forms of therapy in the world these days, especially in the West. Apart from allopathy, ayurveda and homeopathy, there are many systems in the western countries which we may not even be aware of. But as more 'pathies' are developed, more people are getting sick and more new diseases are discovered. A few years ago we had never heard of AIDS, but today we hear about it all the time. We read about it in every newspaper. Modern medicine has no cure for it although many people claim to have found one. Some ayurvedic doctors and herbalists have claimed they have a cure. The funny thing is that they have not been able to trace or identify the source of AIDS. They say it is due to contaminated blood transfusions or that it is transferred from mother to child. But where does it come from? They say it comes from some African monkey virus. That is too far-fetched!

There are more diseases and more therapies coming up all the time. There is magnetic therapy. There are psychic healers who have certificates to do that work. In Italy I saw

psychic healers having to prove the size of the aura around their fingers through Kirlian photography. When I went to Rome, I was the guest of an Italian lady who did psychic healing. In London I saw many psychic healing centres. They have nice studios for the patients, then they take an olive branch and say, "Now your disease is going away, now you are lying in the ocean of bliss." They keep on making suggestions for hours. I don't know what happens. The more doctors there are, the more diseases there are. Disease is a challenge! In the past, people used to say, "Oh what a blessed soul he was! He died in an instant, while sitting in his chair. There was no pain. His prana escaped in one moment. What an elevated soul he must be!" We used to hear such conversations back in our childhood. People did not know of the existence of heart attacks. Dying in an instant was the reward for good deeds then. Now it has become a disease.

Yoga teaching has turned into a movement in Europe. Is it the same in India?

In India the teaching of yoga in schools has been neglected. It has not spread like wildfire as it has in Europe. Yoga is our culture; it was born here and volumes have been written on it. It has also been attached to the religion here. Despite all this, today it is not a movement in India. In other countries, yoga is a mass movement which is expanding spontaneously. In India, however, despite the recommendation of the government, it is not gathering momentum. Why is there this apathy, this lack of interest, especially when it is our culture?

In the West, people have given up aerobics because they say it leads to hypertension and heart attacks. Now those teachers of aerobics in the West have come to the East and are earning money here through teaching and making fitness programs for television! Yoga has now become an intense movement in the West. People send their children to learn yoga! Why has yoga not become an established part of Indian culture? This is a question worth thinking about. We must find the answer.

Could it be that this apathy is because the government has only now begun to patronize yoga?

No. A mass movement does not wait to be patronized by the government; it is based on the needs of the people. Food is a need and so there is a kitchen in every house. Do people wait for the government to come and set up their kitchen? Does the government offer subsidies? Does it say, "Light your ovens and we will give you a fifty percent subsidy?" No, it does not. You light your ovens because it is your need. Whether you make dry chapatis or cook them in ghee, make parathas, cook rice, or slice your potatoes thick or thin is up to you. The government has no involvement at all. Your need is to keep something alive and to elevate it; that is your work and responsibility. But if you do not have faith or conviction in the first place that yoga is your need, and that its practice and propagation is your responsibility, then it is not going to work.

Consider this small example. Sannyasa is a tradition of our country. In olden times children were sent to a gurukul for some time. Whether the child was from a royal family or a farmer's family, he would shave his head, serve the guru, the guru's mother and his wife. Nowadays the people of this country are scared of this tradition, fearing that their sons may become sannyasins and, therefore, celibates for life. But this tradition is being adopted by westerners, who have no problem with shaving their heads, changing their names and adopting spiritual life. They do so, not out of blind faith, but with natural ease and the conviction that this tradition is necessary for coming generations.

Without traditions which inculcate self-discipline, the boys and girls go out of control, as is happening in our country. As soon as children acquire a little bit of education, they go beyond all discipline and control. This happens because parents do not give their children any knowledge of inner life during childhood. This knowledge cannot be acquired at home. It can only be given outside in special places, like a gurukul, even if the child stays there only for six months, one year or one and a half years.

Modern society seems to have made sensory pleasure the main aim of life. Look at the amount of hard work required to propagate yoga within society. Despite government help and media support, the vehicle of yoga is moving at a snail's pace in Indian society. Unless you are convinced that yoga is as vital for your life as money, food and sleep, nothing can be done to change this situation. The reason for this is that our culture has been somewhat adulterated. Our cultural consciousness has been tampered with and other people have tried to impart their social and cultural values to us, so that we would become like them, we would think like them and even have the same faith.

In our culture, Vedic Dharma, worship of form, has been given the ultimate importance. Yet Shankaracharya was under a compulsion to advocate formless worship. At that time Buddhism had influenced the thinking people of the country. Shankaracharya began to talk about formless worship in order to reconcile Vedic Dharma with Buddhism. It was a compromise. Even today we are compromising. Shankaracharya began to talk about formless worship even though, by definition, there cannot be worship of something formless. How can you worship something which has no form? You can only worship something which has a form whether it be Rama, Shiva, Sri Krishna, Hanuman, Guru or a Devi such as Durga or Kali. A form is a must for worship. However, Shankaracharya had to talk about formless worship to reconcile the influence of another religious stream of thought.

Despite highlighting the importance of the worship of form, Tulsidas was also forced to write about worship of the formless. Tulsidas advocated the worship of a form throughout, but nowhere did he negate or ignore worship of the formless either. He wrote in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

*The concept of Brahma is twofold,
Formless and with form.
Both are indescribable and immeasurable,
Without beginning and incomparable.*

What was his compulsion? Such things happen due to the influence of another religion. Royal patronage forcibly imposed its ideas on the people through teachers, educators and political leaders. Mahatmas had to make compromises. For example, today we say that all religions point towards the same goal. Do they really? I am speaking from a philosophical, not a sectarian or communal, point of view. The ultimate achievement of Vedic Dharma is attainment of divinity, of God. But this is not the goal of Islam. In fact, this is not even a possibility in Islam, nor in Christianity, because their God is formless. And there is no question of attaining a state of formlessness.

Despite this, what is the compulsion today which makes us say that all religions have the same goal? Such a compulsion exists in every age and it was due to such a compulsion that yoga was relegated to one side. There were many other reasons as well. Apart from political reasons, there were cultural and social ones. In India, even in ancient times, there were many thinkers and literary people, but few wrote about yoga directly. Although the content of their writing was derived from yoga, the expression they used was often different. Gorakhnath, Matsyendranath, Nivrittinath and Bhartrihari all belonged to that age and they wrote on hatha yoga and pranayama. The Bhagavat Purana and *Ramacharitamanas* were written in those times.

In every age there have been reasons for either highlighting or suppressing yoga. Even today we find that not everyone is a supporter of yoga. Many people equate yoga with religion. If you go to an Islamic school and ask them to include yoga classes in the curriculum, they will refuse. When I was in Munger I had some indirect influence over a good school run by Christian missionaries. I used my contacts to have someone invest thirty thousand rupees to set up a science laboratory in that school. The teachers decided to start yoga classes and they spoke with me for one and a half hours to find out the relationship between yoga and religion.

Of course, it is nearly impossible to win against me in an argument. I turned the Bible upside down, speaking with conviction as if it were a book about asana and pranayama. Because they had studied the Bible from their point of view and I had studied it from mine, I used the Bible as a weapon to make them understand the yogic viewpoint. I did such a good job that they understood me completely. I gained their confidence. The asana and pranayama classes began and they are still going.

Once I went to Baroda, where some people from the Muslim community came to ask me about asana. I told them that I would address them if they had a group of twenty to twenty-five people interested in this topic. They arranged a talk and four hundred people turned up. I began to speak on namaz and gradually led up to asana, because namaz consists of many asanas – padahastasana, tadasana, shashankasana and others. Then I told them about the effects of these asanas on the thyroid and adrenal glands. They could not understand what I was saying, but they knew that it was scientific and, therefore, they listened to me intently.

One gentleman, a lawyer, was so inspired that he wrote a book about it called *Yoga in Islam*. In the book he made the point that one could recite an *ayad*, a verse from the Koran, and then perform the asana. Then he went to Pakistan, had his book printed and sold a number of copies there. Of course I said, “This is very good.” But whatever the religion or sect one belongs to, most people are really fearful about yoga. They have strange ideas such as, “Yoga is synonymous with samadhi; you may go there and never come back.”

A few days ago when you spoke about sacrificing the body and emotions, you mentioned surrender of the spirit. Could you speak more about this?

The path of bhakti is the greatest of all paths, especially for those who want to have darshan of God, the vision of reality. But one thing is certain, there is some obstacle standing

between God and me, whether you call it the body, mind or emotions. There is divinity within every being. I know this because I have heard it. This is true. I believe that He is nearer to me than my own prana, nearer than my own breath, nearer than my own thought. If this is the case then why can't I feel Him? Why can't I see Him? In an attempt to answer this question, Kabir Das has said:

*Throughout the day and night,
I have this suspicion in my mind.
Although my lover resides in this very township,
I take him to be living in some foreign land.
I could write a letter to my lover
If he were somewhere abroad,
But when he is inside my body, mind and eyes,
How can I send him a message?
Even while residing in this house, he is invisible,
Nor can he be grasped by my hands.
How to give him a place,
Who is attained but still unattained?*

It means that the mind, which is the means of perceiving and cognizing reality, is blindfolded, or that there is something affecting this perception or cognition. You have to first find a method to relate to Him. Unless you connect this microphone to the electrical circuit, it will not work. Similarly, if you cannot relate to God in one form or another, you will not have the perception of Him, of reality. Before you find this relationship, you have to know how many relationships a *jiva* or individual soul can realize or discover with God. It has been said that God is my mother, my father, my relative, my friend, my knowledge, my wealth, my all in all. But are these the only relationships one can have with God? No.

After coming to Rikhia, I discovered my relationship with God and that too by the grace of God. Now I know who He is to me and who I am to Him. He is my master and I am His servant. Kabir Das has also said:

*Not of air, water, earth or sky;
Kabir is the most obedient servant
Of one Lord only who is spotless.*

Therefore, whatever I do, I do as an errand for Him. It is His work that I do. If I do japa, it is because He has asked me to do it. If I don't do it, it is because He has asked me not to do it. If I meditate, it is because He wants it, not because it is my wish. Of course, I like to meditate, to do japa, but I will not do these spiritual things because I want to, for then my ego comes in. There comes a point when the servant has to sacrifice his personal choice. As Kabir Das says:

*O great souls,
The experience of spontaneous samadhi
Is incomparable and preferable to all else.
There is no end to the remembrance
Of the day when my soul met with the Lord.
I do not close my eyes or ears,
Nor do I torture my body in any way.
With rapture I gaze at His beautiful form.
Whatever I say is His Name.
Whatever I hear is His remembrance.
Whatever I do is His worship.
I see the house and the garden as one.
I erase the duality from my mind.
Wherever I go, that is His journey.
And whatever I do, that is His service.
Wherever I sleep, that is prostration before Him.
I never worship any other God.
My mind is always engaged
In the remembrance of His name.
I have abandoned utterance of filthy words.
That remembrance is continuous and never forgotten,
Whether in standing or sitting position.
Kabir says, this is the state of unmani mudra.
There is a pleasure beyond joy and sorrow;
I am always merged in that blissful state.*

My personal choice is meditation, to remain in constant practice of japa: one hundred million times, one thousand million times, ten thousand million times, twenty thousand million times. I wish that God would always say to me, “Satyananda, meditate.”

I want God to direct me to do something which I like, but if He tells me to do something I do not like, and still I do it as per His wishes, it is called sacrifice. Supposing He were to say to me, “Satyananda, why don’t you marry this girl? She will make a very nice wife. She will serve you and wash your clothes.” Then I would reply, “My God! Why are you telling me all this now? I am seventy-five years old and now you are asking me to marry, which is a heavy responsibility even for a young man of twenty-five!” This is not a correct attitude. I would have to sacrifice my wishes because He wants it. My personal discomfort, displeasure and difficulties do not count here at all. To elucidate this Kabir Das has said:

*Even if you offer your body and wealth,
It is very difficult to surrender the mind.
How can one rely on such a servant who,
In the opinion of Kabir, is not worth much.*

Sacrifice may be painful to you, but it is the fulfilment of your promise. The fulfilment of God’s command is called sacrifice. It may pinch the body, the flesh, but it doesn’t matter because it gives the ultimate pleasure, which lies only in fulfilling His order and command. You have to sacrifice step by step, first the body, then the mind, then the emotions and feelings and finally the spirit. Sacrificing the spirit means that even the concept and the desire for moksha, to be near God, even the wish to have the blessings of God, even the desire to have something to do with Him, has to be broken down.

Therefore, I don’t want anything, not even you. You are my master and I will always think about you and be with you. But today it doesn’t matter if you don’t come to me. Similarly, in the *Srimad Bhagavata*, Vritrasur also says to the Lord:

*O Lord, I will not accept anything,
 Be it Brahmaloaka, heaven or the empire of the world,
 Or be it even the kingdom of the lower world.
 I am not ready to accept even the siddhis of yoga,
 Nor kaivalya, moksha or liberation itself.
 As the wingless young fledglings still in the nest,
 Or hungry calves of cows eagerly await their mothers,
 Or as a beloved, separated from his loved one,
 In a far off place remains restless to meet him,
 Similar is my condition, longing again and again
 For the vision of your face, beautiful as a lotus.
 I do not mind bondage to the wheel of birth and death,
 Which is due to my karmas that I cannot avoid.
 But I wish to live ever in the company of your devotees
 And have friendship with those inspired souls alone.
 I do not want to form any relation with others who,
 By your maya, are attached to wife, son or house.*

O Lord, you may send your messenger and servant Hanuman to tell me what to do. I will do it. You need not tell me yourself. The spirit does not belong to me; it belongs to you. There is no question of my desiring a spiritual life; there is no question of my desiring moksha or freedom. This is absolute surrender. When you are helpless, when you have nowhere to go, when your body is completely tired and broken, when your mind does not function, then your soul becomes free to unite with Him. The bulb breaks and the energy returns to the power house. Similarly, in the *Ramacharitamanas*, Jatayu says to Rama:

*The Vedas have sung that even the meanest is liberated
 If he utters the name of Rama at the time of death.
 Today that very Rama is present before my eyes.
 After seeing that, what is the use of keeping this body?*

How can we surrender to God?

In bhakti, the first and foremost step is to find your relationship with God. Simply saying, 'Rama Rama' will

not do the trick. When you approach a girl, you must first establish a relationship with her and then you can go to her. You first find out whether she is your mother, sister or wife, and then act accordingly. Similarly, there is a specific relationship with God. Find out what it is. Simply repeating, “You are my mother, father, friend and companion,” is not much use. Are there no other relationships apart from mother, father, friend and companion? There are many other relationships in the world. One can be a servant of God like Hanuman. One can be an idiot, a good for nothing, an utterly useless person, a sinner. One can be a mundane person who goes after sensory pleasures, like a pig goes after faeces. All these are also relationships with God. For every person there is one specific relationship with God.

I realized after coming to Rikhia that I am a servant of God. Before that, I thought I was a *bhakta*, a devotee of God. Before that, I thought I was a *jignasu* sadhaka, a spirituak seeker, and before that, a *moksha* sadhaka, a seeker of liberation. I thought I had many other relationships with God, but everything changed after coming here. I found out how wrong I had been all along. None of these relationships was as good as that of a servant of God; this is really the best relationship. You can just sit peacefully. When the master says, “Satyananda, get me some milk from the market”, you say, “Immediately, master”, and rush off. There is no need to bother your head any more with the things of the world.

In devotion to God, there is no need to struggle against the tide. If God tells you to do japa, you do it. If God tells you to meditate, you do it. It doesn't matter whether you want to do that or not. If He tells me to go to the cremation ground, I will. If He tells me to eat muck, I will. This is the relationship of a servant. There is also the relationship of a beloved with God, *madhurya bhava*, and there is the relationship of childlike affection for God, *sneha bhava*.

There are many such relationships. Ravana had the relationship of an adversary with God, *veera bhava*. If you have the guts, you may do that too. Beat the Lord with a stick

every day. From early morning throw at Him all the abusive words that exist in your dictionary. Ravana had the guts. You don't have the guts. You aren't able to sit down early in the morning and shout, "Rascal, thief, hooligan", and much more at Him. Veera bhava is beyond your capacity; it is the highest form of bhakti. Ravana attained salvation in merely nine days through it. After Ravana's death, his wife Mandodari said:

*There is no ocean of compassion
Like the master of Raghukul,
Who gave my husband such a state,
Which is difficult to attain even by yogis.*

Many people sing the praises of the Lord again and again, but even at the end of life there is nothing at hand. Veera bhava is superior to the devotion which Radha had for Sri Krishna. Radha's bhakti was spontaneous; she did not have to strive for it. Bhakti manifested in all its glory in Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Mirabai and other saints. First find your relationship with God. Once you discover that relationship, your spiritual life will progress by itself. The best path is bhakti, in fact, it is the only path. Therefore, it has been said in the *Narada Bhakti Sutras*:

*Bhakti is much easier to attain
Than any other form of spiritual practice.*

It has also been said there:

*The nature of love is as indescribable
As taste is by a person who is dumb.*

Bhakti means pure, true love. What the world calls love is not true love. Love for your children, your mother, your brother, your wife is not true love; it is attachment, *asakti*. There may be an element of love there, a minute amount, but it is not true love. There is no true love in this world. Bhakti is true love and it is not associated with the body, mind or soul; it is related with *bhavana*, feeling. When you hate someone,

you think about him day and night. When someone dear to you dies, you remember him all the time. The memory haunts you and you cannot forget it, even if you want to. That feeling is bhavana, which is the chief ingredient, the basic cause, of love. Again it has been said in the *Naradi Bhakti Sutras*:

*After attaining bhakti of God,
The devotee sees nothing else.
He hears, speaks and thinks only of Him.*

The problem is that your feelings are confused, preoccupied with the tangles of the world. Therefore, your bhavana is not free. You have to free your bhavana one way or another. Sometimes something happens in life which frees the bhavana for a while, say five to six months, but bhavana should be constantly free. When a young man and woman fall in love with each other, like Laila and Majnu or Romeo and Juliet, their bhavana withdraws from all other avenues and becomes concentrated in the partner. Laila could only see Majnu and Majnu could only see Laila, nothing else. I am talking here about the oneness of bhavana. Hanuman's awareness was constantly focused on Sri Rama. It is like the way you look after the needs of your family every day. Some part of you is thinking about them even though you do not repeat their name all the time. A servant has a similar attitude towards his master, a son has a similar attitude towards his parents.

Therefore, look for the most intense relationship that you can feel with God so that your bhavana may merge quickly with Him. What is an intense relationship? It will not do to say that God is my father-in-law. What relationship does one have with a father-in-law? He is not your true father, he is your father by law. Similarly, your mother-in-law is your mother only by law. It will not do to say that God is my father-in-law, mother-in-law, uncle or nephew. Look for that relationship with God in which your feelings will stick firmly to Him. Find out what is most special about your attitude

towards Him. My bhavana is that of a servant. Why? Because for twelve years I was the servant of my guru and then for twelve years I was the servant of my disciples. I have become used to being a servant.

We have an old saying that, 'guru is a donkey and disciple is a dog'. For twelve years I was my guru's dog and for another twelve years I was my disciples' donkey. Now I have become used to it, so I decided why not establish the same relationship with God? First, you have to find out what your inner nature is, then what your bhavana is, then what the manifest form of that bhavana is. Some people have affection, some have romantic love, some have gentleness, some have enmity. According to your inner feeling, find your relationship with the Lord.

*I bow down to that Raghunandan
Whose name is Rama
And whose abode is Ayodhya.
I bow down to that Madhusoodan
Whose name is Shyam
And whose abode is Gokul.
I bow down to that liberator
Whose name is Shankar
And whose abode is Kashi.
I bow down to that life sustainer
Whose name is Satyam
And whose abode is the Self.*

The *Ramacharitamanas* is not only the most beautiful epic, it is also easy to understand. It is not necessary to study the book intensively to know about Lord Rama's life, his lilas, his inner nature and his true being. You can understand it as spontaneously as you talk about your child, your husband, your cow or your goat. Lord Rama is not a god who lives in the sky. He is here, within us. He sits within me. It is very easy to be with Him. Reflect on Him constantly. The family will keep functioning, the train will keep moving. You can also eat peanuts, drink cups of tea and enjoy the journey. In

the same way, remembering God's name should play a more prominent role in your life.

For a poor person, the biggest worry is obtaining food. In fact, the rich also have this worry. Whereas the poor struggle for rotis and dal, the rich worry about their bread and butter. People with even more money worry about sauce and jam. Everyone, whether rich or poor, has worries and problems. The problems of the poor are poor problems, those of the millionaire are millionaire problems and those of the billionaire are billionaire problems. The poor man has a cough, cold, fever and diarrhoea, whereas the millionaire has a heart attack. That is the only difference. Village people should never think that poverty is a curse. Poverty is not a curse nor is affluence a boon. You simply have to change your way of thinking regarding this issue. Rich people, who can afford the best medical specialists and the most expensive medicines, generally do not have enough time to even wait for the arrival of the doctor. By the time the doctor arrives they have already said, "Namo Narayan."

Satsang gives everyone a kind of happiness and peace. In the same way kirtan gives happiness. In every village ten to fifteen people should sit together every evening with *dholak* and *manjira*, drum and cymbals, and sing kirtan. A kirtan could be sung like this:

*It is easier to acquire a father, mother, brother
Or a comforting young lady.
It is also easier to acquire a kingdom, horses, elephants
And all kinds of articles whenever desired.
This world is the abode of devas, or of Brahma,
And even heaven is readily attainable.
Poet Sundar says that all comforts are attained easily
But company of the wise is very difficult to obtain.*

If you do not have *dholak* and *manjira*, ask God for them, because He is the provider. Asking me is of no use because I am not the provider. He is the master and I am the servant. Unless I have His permission I will not provide anything.

Whatever you do, wherever you may be, reflect on God.
When you are out in the fields say:

*These are my brinjals,
These are my potatoes,
This is my Rama,
This is my Gopala.*

Think that wherever you are sitting is your temple, whatever you are doing is service towards God. This is what your bhavana should be. If you are harvesting your paddy, think that the field is the temple of God. After all, grains are a form of God, a devata; water is a form of God, a devata; earth is a goddess, a devi; wind is a devata called Pawan, the father of Hanuman. God is everywhere. Keep reflecting on God. Always sing the name of God. Shabari, Draupadi, Dhruva and Prahlad all sang it. Just see how much strength there is in the name of God! He solved the problems of Prahlad and delivered Dhruva. He saved the honour of Draupadi. They all prayed to God for attaining a purpose, and God fulfilled their wishes. Their bhakti was *artharthi*, to fulfil a specific end, for liberation from some misery or pain. But Shabari had no vested interest in worshipping Lord Rama. Her bhakti was *nishkama*, desireless. She was simply lost in love. In the *Srimad Bhagavata*, Sri Krishna says to Uddhava:

*O Uddhava, there is no way to liberation
Other than bhakti yoga and satsang,
Because I always remain with great souls.*

For all bhaktas, *Bhagavat naam*, the name of God, is a medicine, whether they are *jignasu*, *jnani*, *artharthi* or *premi*. There are four types of bhaktas or devotees. Those who are inquisitive about God, who want to inquire about truth are *jignasu bhaktas*. Those who pray to God for wish fulfilment, for a son or money, are called *artharthi bhaktas*. Those who are saturated with subtle knowledge and discrimination are called *jnani bhaktas*. Some people, however,

pray to God because they are in love with Him. They are the *premi bhaktas*. Shabari was one of them. It has been said in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

*The yogi keeps awake by repeating His name,
So do those who are detached from creation.
They experience that Brahman joyfully,
Who is indescribable, without imperfection,
Having no name or form.
Those who want to know His hidden movements
Perceive them by repeating His name with the tongue.
Spiritual practitioners repeat the name,
Becoming totally absorbed in it,
They become adepts and obtain siddhis.
When people repeat the name,
Even extreme types of adversities and misfortunes
Are uprooted and they become happy.
The devotees of Rama are of four kinds
And all four are virtuous, sinless and benevolent.*

Satsang 25

3 December 1994

We make bricks here which are utilized for building houses in the villages. A lady has arrived from France who knows how to make bricks. Her daughter has been living here for some time and she knows about woodwork, carpentry, masonry and electrical work. When the wooden furniture gets old and has been damaged by weevils, she knows which insecticides to use and how to prevent further damage. She learnt these skills from her father with whom she used to work. She is quite young, but enjoys her work. Today a new house is being built nearby and she has gone to mark out the plot.

Actually, the people of India are so busy running after money that they do not have time for seva. For seva you need time, two to six months of solid work, but if they take time off for seva, who will look after the family? It is all a race for money. For these young people in the ashram, the race for money has ended. That does not mean that they have money; it means that they have developed an aversion for money. Just as one develops an aversion for food after eating too much, just as one gets bored with too much running around and too much sleeping, one also gets bored with hankering after money.

You may not have realized this, but the next generation of Indians will. It is true that man becomes so averse to earning money after having done it for a long period of

time that he decides to abandon this pursuit altogether. He decides to sleep on the ground; no more money, no more house. This is a philosophy, and it was the philosophy of our country in ancient times. In Indian philosophy, culture and society, the race to earn money has always been discouraged. When foreign powers came to India, however, we were encouraged to earn more money. These powers brought the market economy with them and then we were trapped.

Now, people in the West are moving away from this system, and in twenty or thirty years they will all be following a different lifestyle. Even now there are many people who do not hold a job consistently. They earn a little by working for three or four months of the year and then travel around for the other nine months. Some like visiting temples or deities, others like going to the beach or to the mountains. Some read Vedanta while others study Sanskrit, Chinese or Japanese. We are not like them.

In India, people have always confined themselves to their family, which now means husband, wife and children. People do not have time to think about their brother or sister's family. The nuclear family is the beginning and the end of all man's selfishness. Now no one worries or cares about anyone else's family. Even if they do it is only for show. The main concern is about what other people will think, that's all. There is no real interest. If this is the attitude towards one's own kith and kin, what of the neighbours to whom they are not even related? This is the situation everywhere in our country, although it is relatively better in the villages. Concern for others still exists in the villages, but it is eroding fast. In the cities this attitude has almost disappeared and, as a result, people are feeling increasingly insecure.

Just now a foreign couple has come here to visit their daughter. She has been working here for the last six months in the construction of houses. Her parents are happy that she is working here. There are others like her. Her parents do not ask her to earn money, to get married or to perform

their last rites. No, this attitude is useless. Why restrict life to such things? No one has seen their next life. It is all in the mind. If you accept it, then it's fine. If you don't accept it, even then it's all right. Can any pandit, priest, sadhu or mahatma prove rebirth? Can they prove that the food we offer to our ancestors in *pinda daan* actually goes to them? No, they can only refer to what is written in books. Let someone prove that the offering actually reaches the spirits of our ancestors. So far there is no proof.

Western society does not get into these speculative beliefs. In India, however, we immediately say, "It is written in the Ramayana that Sitaji did this and Dasaratha also did this." I am not disputing that it is written in the books. All I am saying is that what is written in the books can be right or wrong. The writer is not around to give us proof. Someone wrote the book maybe four hundred years ago in somebody else's name. In today's world anyone can write books in anyone's name. Someone can write a book in my name today. So there is no proof that the theory of rebirth is true. Where do you find it?

Recently Prajna Bharati gave a program in Jabalpur and narrated the story of his past two births. He was taken to one of his past birthplaces in Kashi, but unfortunately a new housing estate had been built there so it could not be verified. But when he was taken to Vrindavan, another of his past birthplaces, he recollected everything exactly as it was and the proof was there. However, if he were to be cross-examined by a group of lawyers, everything he said would be pulled apart. The present society accepts only those truths for which there is empirical proof. Today society lives in the external reality and only accepts things after testing them.

Future generations will challenge all these proofs and they will not accept them unless they are convinced of them. Of course, they will have to accept certain basic truths. Truth is only one, but there are two ways of knowing the truth – one is objective and the other is subjective. The subjective

truth cannot be known and the objective truth has no proof. Only a few gurus or mahatmas can know the subjective proof, and that proof is only found inside. Suppose a pregnant lady is given all the vitamins and nutrients necessary to bear a healthy child, yet the child is born an invalid, handicapped or blind. Why does this happen? The nutritious food given to the mother reached the child, but the basic life element is in the genes. It is not affected by food, only genetic transfer can have an effect on this element.

When the child is born handicapped, it is said to be due to his karma, but if he has not done any karma in this life, how can he receive the fruits of his action? To say, "I have seen my past births," is not enough to establish a point now, because people born today have a new attitude. A new generation is being born into a new chaotic world in which parents have no control over their children's samskaras. They are exposed to an upbringing in which haphazard thoughts occupy their minds; their thinking is anarchical. In such a situation, I think that a new social constitution has to be established in which there is nothing that the new generation can question.

Instead, the social set-up should be such that they ask themselves questions such as, "If rebirth is not true, then how did this happen?" They should ask such questions because the future generation will accept facts only in the presence of subjective and objective evidence. They will only believe if substantial evidence is provided. Nowadays we have a shortage of mahatmas who can provide subjective proof. Those who can give objective evidence are the scientists, the present day rishis. But these seers do not venture into the subjective direction; they say that matter is ultimate.

For this reason, it is important that in the coming century, scientists turn their experiments, investigations and observations inward. We have to find a way to direct their attention towards subtle planes. The only way to do it is by working on these faithless people who are devoid of trust, agnostics, believers of classical thought, lost in

the pleasures of materialism. They have to be initiated into metaphysical realms. Unless we direct them onto this path, the scientific community will continue to experiment with matter alone, which it has been doing all these years. Experiments have been carried out in chemistry, electronics, physics, genetics, and so on, and the results are there for us all to see.

The scientists are the rishis. Rishi Kanada formulated the atomic theory and he denied the authority of God. He said that atoms and molecules are the ultimate. Therefore, his name was Kanada – *Yah Parama Dadati-Kanada*. You can call it Kana theory or particle theory. *Kana* means particle; it is a theory of the particle. Buddha negated God, Mahavir negated God. They both said the world was originally fluid and that it solidified very slowly. This has become a theory of spiritual evolution. Many philosophers have negated God and rebirth. Some were very powerful philosophers. Kanada was one of them. Mahavir was a great philosopher. Jabali Rishi was also very powerful and he denied the established beliefs.

A scientist is one who goes deep into any event and comes out with facts. The experiments conducted in the twenty-first century will be on the spiritual path and will have bhakti as their basis. I can see clearly that bhakti will form the basis because in western countries, where a lot of scientific experiments take place, there is great interest. People in the West are very much inclined towards the path of bhakti. The path of bhakti means faith and trust. The basis of bhakti is trust.

A two-and-a-half year-old boy became blind due to an accident. He was told that it was due to his past karmas. The boy asked, “Why do we have to bear the results of our past karmas in this life? Why doesn’t God allow us to bear them in the same life instead of the next life?” Nowadays such questions are raised quite often and no one has an answer. There is only one reply, that he must have committed some evil karma in his past life and so he has to face the

consequences in this life. But today's generation is not ready to accept that.

In earlier days, when I gave programs attended by intellectuals and educated people, they would ask mind-boggling questions. To silence them I would hypnotize them. They would sense it and say, "Swamiji hypnotizes us by making our minds blank and does not answer us." Nachiketa also asked Yamaraj the same question. Yamaraj told him not to ask such questions which no one could answer. He told the boy to ask him anything else, but not to ask what is beyond this life. This question has not been answered anywhere in the *Kathopanishad*. Yamaraj did not reply to Nachiketa's question.

The afterlife is a tenet of our scriptures. If you search in the Vedas, you will find many principles relating to rebirth. The principle of rebirth which is prevalent now relates to Samkhya philosophy, which speaks about the gross, the subtle and the causal body. At the time of death, all the karmas leave the gross body and enter the subtle body. The causal body takes the subtle body along with it and the gross body is left behind. After a certain number of months or years, the seed sprouts again and falls into a mother's womb. This is the view of Samkhya. The theories prevalent in recent times on karma, samskara and so on are based on Samkhya philosophy, but the Vedas speak of many more concepts. The Vedic theory of transmigration is not a simple explanation.

Many philosophies, Jain, Buddhist and others, talk about rebirth though they present it in different ways. The Vedas also speak of different stages of transmigration of the soul, but they do not present a common viewpoint. They say that the soul lives in spirit form for a certain number of years, then in human form, then again in spirit form. So, if you do not perform certain rituals for the departed soul, this will happen and that will happen. In this way many theories have been presented. This is explained in the *Garuda Purana* also, but all these concepts are only beliefs.

When Arjuna and Karna were fighting, it was said that they were actually Sugriva and Bali in their previous births. Is this also a case of rebirth?

It is said to be so. Even I can say that I was a dog or a donkey in my past birth. Saying is one thing, but direct, positive, empirical evidence must be provided to substantiate it. Today's world demands this.

Is it possible to provide evidence for everything?

I am speaking of a scientific attitude. Your question is not scientific. Scientists say there should be proof of existence for whatever exists.

How does the newborn identify his or her parents?

It is not possible to tell you how a newborn is able to identify the parents, but the point is that there is a continuity of consciousness or a continuity of soul. Is there a soul? Jainism says there is a soul. It says that the jivatma is real. Buddhists also believe it, but belief alone is not enough. Sometimes it also becomes a compulsion not to believe. Now the age of irreverence has begun. Previously belief was considered as a path of knowledge: *Shraddhavan labhate jnanam* – “the believer attains knowledge.” Until this century the moon and Mars were being worshipped, but now we know that there are many ditches.

One day in Iran I was talking to an Iranian and I remarked in jest that they were worshipping the moon on which man had landed and walked. The Iranian replied that it was all lies, that nobody had landed. He said that it was all propaganda and he could not accept it. He had the nature of an ostrich, hiding his head in the sand and thinking he was safe. There are many beliefs which science has certainly challenged, dismantled and destroyed.

Are all the mudras given in Saundarya Lahari?

Don't ask me all these things now. I will speak according to my wish and not your wish. I am not here to preach or

to teach anyone. I am only entertaining you. My dharma is not to teach. I am not a guru or a teacher or an intellectual. I am just a person. I have left all my lilas and now I live in solitude.

Your habit is to cling, but my habit is to leave behind. This has been my fifth year of panchagni. In the beginning I made a sankalpa that I would practise panchagni for five years. Panchagni has to be practised for either five years, seven years, twelve years or a lifetime. I decided to practise for five years and that is now finished. These five years were very difficult for me. People did not understand why I should not meet them.

In order to progress in spiritual life, a sannyasin passes through four stages of evolution. In the first stage he lives with his guru for a period of twelve years. In the second stage he travels as a *parivrajaka*, wandering sannyasin, for twelve years. Then in the third stage he settles down and builds a temple, hospital, ashram or something for the upliftment of the society. Finally, in the fourth stage he leaves that establishment and goes into solitude, where he has nothing to do with his past karma. That is what I decided for myself.

I have no interest in meeting people, and it is the *niyama*, the rule of my tradition. Paramahamsas do not meet people, initiate anyone, give or receive anything. They live in solitude and observe silence. These are their rules:

*Living alone in a cave
Without suffering in any asana
Is a bliss-bestowing experience.
Where is all this written?
Everything is written.
Sannyasins have definite rules.*

Do you believe all that has been written in the shastras?

Yes, I am a believer, not an atheist. What I was saying on rebirth was based on contemporary thought. The world

is like this. If you want to make a point, your traditional method will not work; only my method will work. Look at your sadhus and mahatmas. They could not establish what I have established, even in a hundred years. But I knew where Indians were most susceptible. When foreigners practised yoga and benefited, we also adopted it. When hospitals in foreign countries introduced yoga, the Indian medical fraternity also recognized it. Then yoga spread from Delhi to Pondicherry. Even people of high status started to practise yoga. If yoga had not been accepted by the West, it would have remained an esoteric science in India, utilized only by sadhus and mahatmas, not by householders.

The tendency of the present and future generations towards atheism is clear. People demand proof! The way questions are answered in the shastras is not acceptable. A few people may accept it, but most will be unable to understand or believe it. Today's world requires solid proof, which we can deliver. We are going to tap this very culture for principles of truth and spiritual vision upon which future generations can build a higher life. To get the work started we need a thorn, not a flower, to remove another thorn. The antidote for poison is poison, similarly, atheistic thought has to be tackled through the approach of atheism, which demands proof.

What is the most important aspect of bhakti?

The foremost attributes on the path of bhakti are trust and faith. Bhakti is an emotional quality. *Shraddha*, faith, and *vishwas*, belief, belong to your psychological personality. Their effects can be measured in terms of electromagnetic radiations. What is the effect of faith, trust and belief on the blood pressure and metabolism? Faith and trust are personal things. How can I know how much trust and faith you have? Can they be measured if I cannot see them?

We cannot see faith or belief, but I can feel mine and you can feel yours. However, that is not enough. It has to be

proved that I have faith and belief, and this is the result, in black and white. Objective data should be produced. Trust and faith are the basis of bhakti and they are such that they cannot be seen with the eyes. Sometimes you think that you believe, but you do not. Many times your beliefs are broken, shattered and impotent. But sometimes belief is so powerful that it can restore life to the dead. Sometimes faith works miracles and sometimes it fails. What does that mean? What is it that fails?

What is that faith? Is it a blood flow or a current of electromagnetic radiation? What is the form of bhavana? Has it got weight? Has it got some impulse or is it some sort of light or vibration? Is bhavana a vibration or a flow? It is what you call a feeling and it exists for sure, because when we are angry, we hate. We feel like killing that person because of this feeling and we cannot sleep at night. The feeling of anger disturbs the heart and blood pressure, doesn't it? When you have enmity towards someone, you lose your appetite. The liver also functions improperly. In many people worries and anxieties cause the eyesight to become weak.

This means that the effect of bhavana or feeling on the human body is tangible. Although you cannot see faith or belief, its effects can be felt on the body. Therefore, you can know the cause through the effect. Many times you may not know the cause, but you can come to know it by the effect. In this case you know the effect first and then postulate a cause. Here postulation comes later. Bhakti yoga can be the next topic of scientific research. Until now scientists have only done research on matter. They are not going to research the soul or *atma* because they say it does not exist. What research will they do into the spirit? But certainly they can research feeling, faith and trust.

So, I will just talk about anything until the 17th December. After the 17th I will lock the door and sleep. Oh, the pleasure of solitude. You cannot get that living with other people. Just be alone.

We are sure you won't sleep. You'll shut the door but you won't sleep. What else will you do?

I have nothing much to do except twenty-one thousand, six hundred rounds of japa each day, but I find it difficult. Even the very concept of panchagni I find very difficult to contemplate now. When I was doing panchagni there was joy, but now I can't even think of fire. In the month of Jyeshtha, just to think of fire is difficult, not to speak of sitting in the middle of it! Now I have come out of that state of self-hypnosis. I don't think I will be able to do panchagni again. It was very difficult. The temperature goes as high as 60 or 70 degrees centigrade and one becomes dehydrated. Mahatmas do panchagni sadhana; it is not unusual for them, but most of them die in the process. The rules of panchagni vidya are only meant for two types of people: either a person who is beyond all cares and concerns, or a rajarishi, a royal rishi.

What are the other rules of panchagni?

There are rules regarding food. During that period we take a more liquid diet, more salt and sugar. The food should be sour and cooked with onion, garlic and ginger. You have to prevent dehydration, otherwise when you sit in 60 degrees centigrade your body loses water and dehydrates. The main rule is that you are not to meet people. Complete solitude is required. Special bhasma or ash is prepared and applied. Such bhasma is called *maha bhasma* and is made of pure cow dung cakes and reeds.

The sadhana of panchagni vidya is performed from *Makar Samkranti*, the winter solstice, to *Karka Samkranti*, the summer solstice, for six months only, not for the whole year. In Karka Samkranti the fire is pacified. The fire has different forms which are in specific arrangements. In the *Kathopanishad* (1:12–15), there is a discourse between Nachiketa and Yamaraj about the heavenly fire:

*In heaven there is no fear,
Nor are you there, O Death,*

*Nor is anyone subject to old age.
The gods have conquered hunger and thirst
And in heaven they are merry and free from sorrow.*

*O Death, tell me about that
Fire sacrifice which leads to heaven,
By which the seekers of heaven
Attain immortality, for I am full of faith.
This is my second boon.
I indeed know that fire sacrifice
And I shall tell it to you.
O Nachiketa, be instructed by me.
That is the way to attain heaven,
Which is the support of the world,
And exists in the heart cave of the enlightened.*

*Yama explained to him that fire sacrifice
Which is the source of the world,
And also the kind and number of bricks required,
How these are placed
And how it should be lit.
Then Nachiketa repeated the instructions
And Yama was very satisfied.*

However, there are no details in the *Kathopanishad*. The details regarding how to arrange the bricks and start the fire are in *Satpatha Brahmana*.

It is believed that Parvati also performed panchagni tapasya. There are many people who perform panchagni. It may be done from childhood or later on in life. At an older age there is more risk to life involved. When a sannyasin enters the paramahansa stage he has to do this sadhana, although not all do. If I had not wished to do it, then I would not have done so. It is not compulsory but, in a sense, panchagni is the knowledge of atonement. Sannyasins do karma whereas dharma dictates that sannyasins should not do karma. In Vedic dharma, sannyasa means total renunciation of every karma except eating, drinking,

urinating and excreting. Now we say to the whole world, “Do karma yoga, do seva,” but the tradition does not say that. It says that the nitya karmas can be done but not the kama karmas.

Karmas are of three types: nitya, naimittika and kama. *Nitya karmas* are actions of bathing, eating, excreting. *Naimittika karmas* are actions performed by one who is *nimitta*, an instrument of God and guru. *Kama karmas* are actions or work done with a selfish desire or motive. Nitya karma has to be performed by all, including a sannyasin, because he still lives in the body. However, until *videha mukti*, liberation from the body, the sannyasin is asked to renounce all other karmas. This is a rule laid down in the Vedas. But it is not a practical rule, because sometimes the desire for or attitude of sannyasa arises at a young age for various reasons.

While still in college, a boy of twenty may attend a satsang and feel an internal urge to take sannyasa. He may take sannyasa, but his work in life is not yet over. His karmas have not yet been exhausted; he has not satisfied the three main drives in human life: *putraishana*, the drive for progeny, *daraishana*, the sexual drive, and *vittaishana*, the drive for money, house and assets. Some people also have a fourth, which is *lokaishana*, the drive to achieve name and fame.

If a young person becomes a sannyasin without fulfilling them, then he will have to perform seva or naimittika karmas for many years. While initiating me in 1947, my guru told me, “I am explaining the sadhana to you, but you should do it only after forty to forty-five years, otherwise you will go mad.” When I asked him why, he replied, “Your share of homework remains undone.” I said, “Okay, I’ll go home and finish it.” He said, “By going home, you will not be able to exhaust your karma, rather you will only increase it. You must do it here.”

So, I lived in the ashram and did all the work there which I would have done at home: management accounting,

building construction, organization. All this I did for my guru, not for myself. There was no desire to obtain any reward for the work. I worked for my guru for twelve years without desiring any fruits from the karma. I neither gained nor lost anything from that because I worked on a non-profit, non-loss basis. I did it for my guru and not for myself. Later on he instructed me to do a bit of study for myself, according to my inclination and aptitude.

After that I established the ashram in Munger. However, I always realized that this work also could not be done for myself, so I did it for my guru. I decided in my mind that it was for him and not for myself. The thought became a strong force in my mind; that this karma is dedicated to my guru, it is not for me, not for my enjoyment, name, fame or glory. I thought that it would become immortal, that was all. Later I realized that just a little bit of dirt still remained in the utensil.

Whatever the karma and wherever it is done, the fruits are not permitted to a sannyasin. Whatever work one does, right and wrong are involved in it. Panchagni tapasya is expiation for this right and wrong. A sannyasin who leads an active life and does various karmas should perform panchagni, however, not all do. Sri Krishna says in the Gita: "The Yogi performs work no doubt, with body, mind, senses and intellect. But all these actions are done by him for self-purification, abandoning attachment."

We know that karma is in the form of a seed. Karmas are released into the consciousness. In the process of opening so many ashrams, visiting countries all over the globe, interacting, moving and living among so many people, it is not possible to remain completely stainless. However intelligent a man may be, if he goes into the coal pit he will have black marks on him. I cannot say that I have come out untainted. Therefore, I had to do panchagni to cleanse myself. Everyone has to do penance. I did it for five years. Now I will sit in bliss.

Is there any difference between bhakti yoga and religious bhakti?

Bhakti means real love. If one loves God, that is bhakti. Anyone who loves God practises bhakti. Everybody can practise bhakti regardless of their religion. Bhakti is a relationship with God. Lord Rama furthermore says in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

*I am always under the control of that person
Who sings my praise with a rejoicing heart,
Whose speech is obstructed by intense joy,
Whose eyes are full of joyful tears,
Who is free from desire, anger and hypocrisy.*

Can bhakti be developed by saying God's name?

Yes, saying God's name is one way and serving Him is another. You can call it soap or sabun. You can give it any name, it doesn't matter. After all, it is language. In Hindi we say sabun, the Spanish people say jabon, the Italians call it sapone, and some call it soap. But the substance remains the same. The relationship between the devotee and God should start with the name. After repeating the name, the feeling develops and that is bhakti. Name or mantra is a method, but actually it is your own inner feeling which is important.

*The bhakti of Raghupati Rama
Is a life-restoring medicine,
But its vehicle the bhakta
Is ever-mindful of utmost reverence.*

What if bhakti is not there?

Bhakti is always there. Everyone has feeling. If you did not have feeling, you would not love or hate. The feeling which goes towards God is the same feeling which goes towards your enemy whom you hate. It is the same feeling which you have when you are afraid or in pain, or which is expressed when you are in love with a girl. The basic stuff is the same;

only the target is different – enemy, beloved or God. Yoga is easy, but bhakti is not easy because it is related to your inner personal feelings, not the mind. Bhakti has nothing to do with mind or intellect. Bhakti is concerned with the heart and feeling. To direct this feeling to God is a very big job; it is not an ordinary job. Therefore, you have to start by directing the feeling towards the form of God which you love.

*Understand that love is not easy,
It is a river of fire
And one has to dive into it.*

You have to direct that feeling towards someone to whom your mind can go and stop for a while. Who could that be? It could be a saint, a guru, or also certain spiritual experiences in your life. If you have not had any, try to create some by finding out about your own personality. This was my problem. I came from a modern community which thought very differently. I did not belong to the cult of faith; I belonged to the cult of thought and reason. So I had that difficulty, but after coming here I discovered my relationship. I do not concentrate on God. I think of Him as I would think of a girl or of my best friend. It is said:

*Going beyond the three feelings
Of servant, served and service,
One has to love always
With the feeling of a servant
Or always with the feeling of a wife,
But there must always be love and love alone.*

This relationship does not demand concentration as in trataka. It is a very simple matter. The mother cooks food for her child in the kitchen, but while cooking does she utter the child's name all the time? No. She is aware that her son or daughter will come and she has toast or a sandwich or spaghetti ready for them. This is *bhavana*, or feeling which is part of the inner consciousness. This is the purpose of inner

awareness. Of course, I do not deny the efficacy of trataka or any other practice, but bhakti is more than that. It is a constant awareness, a process of thinking.

Why should I do japa? Why should I repeat a mantra? I do it because He tells me to do so. I carry out His orders because I am His servant. Why did I come here and stay? He told me to. Why don't I go back to Munger or to some comfortable situation? He doesn't want it. When you are the servant and God is the master, a feeling for the master develops and He becomes a reality in your life. Just as you fantasize about a beautiful girl, you fantasize about your master and yourself as servant.

You can go even further; there are so many ways of establishing a relationship with God. You can say I am a hopeless man, fit for nothing, dirty and bad. What can I do? I can repeat his name, but I am dishonest, and insincere. This feeling of being good for nothing is also a relationship with God. Who can be more deceitful, ungrateful and bound by desire than me? I have forgotten the one who gave me this body, such ingratitude! Similarly, Tulsidas has said:

*Listen, O Lord Rama,
My mind is constantly involved in mischief.
Leaving your lotus feet, it roams day and night.
It does not obey the command of the Vedas
And it is not afraid of anybody.
It has forgotten the pangs of the mill of karmas
In which it has been crushed many times like sesame.
It does not go even in dream to that place
Where satsang or stories of Lord Krishna go on.
It is always involved in greed,
Lust, delusion, insanity and anger,
And it has deep love for them.
When hearing of someone's good qualities
It burns with jealousy and envy,
But is very pleased to know the faults of others.*

*It populates a town of disharmony and sin,
 But cannot bear a small hamlet of goodness.
 The fruits of spiritual practice,
 The essence of the Vedas and your name too,
 This villain sells everything foolishly
 And becomes a servant to base desires.
 On one hand, it is mean, filthy and polluted,
 On the other, encircled by a net of adversity.
 O ocean of compassion, the unbearable torment
 Of mind is impossible to be borne now.
 Being unsuccessful, after trying all the methods
 I am narrating my miserable condition.
 Tulsidas says that unless the Lord resides in his heart,
 He will never be free from fear.*

I am a crook, a traitor, wicked and immoral. I repeat God's name with a closed heart. There is no truth in me. I cheat Him and others as well. I do japa of Rama's name and He does not hear me. What can I do? I am confused. I wander here and there. To think in such a way is also a relationship with God. You have to search for some relationship with God for yourself. You will have to find out what kind of relationship you have. I have thought about it all these years and now, after coming to Rikhia, I have come to know. I used to think that I did everything, that I was serving my guru. Now I know that I have always been a servant.

How do I know the difference between my will and His will? If I devote my life to Him, then the things that I am doing should be for Him, but I know that I am doing these things because of my own desires.

There will be no doubt in your mind. If you are doing something for Him, the questions will not be there. When you are doing as per His command, your mind will have no doubts. The mind becomes absolutely clear like crystal.

I've had that experience, but after a short time suddenly I'm lost again. Is there waxing and waning in feelings also? How do I stop it?

Yes, waxing and waning also happens naturally in the path of bhakti. Waxing and waning has to happen because it is an indicator of the expansion or progression of bhavana, feeling. Man also experiences waxing and waning of material and mundane feelings because the feelings are not stable. When the mind is unstable it experiences ups and downs. Similarly, when feelings are unstable they have their ups and downs. To prevent these ups and downs, one must constantly listen to satsang. Satsang is a tool by which you can recharge your battery with bhavana the moment it is even slightly discharged. Thereby your bhavana will be steady and constant. In this regard, Lord Shiva himself said to Mother Parvati:

*O Girija, there is no benefit like the company of saints,
But that also is not possible without the grace of God.
So it has been declared by the Vedas and the Puranas.*

Eventually you will be fixed in that state which is of a very high order, but right now the ups and downs are inevitable. The waxing and waning of spiritual consciousness is as natural as the waxing and waning of normal consciousness in human beings. During his evolution over the last million years, man has not had a steady consciousness. His consciousness has waxed and waned. It is only now becoming steady, and it is so sweet at the moment. The solution to the problem of life is God, but you have to forge a relationship with Him. You have to discover the relationship because everyone is connected with Him, nobody is disconnected. All the bulbs, refrigerators and air conditioners are connected to the electrical line. Everything is connected, but you have to realize how you are connected with Him. In this way Tulsidas also speaks of many different relationships:

*Thou art kind, I am poor.
 Thou art the provider, I am a beggar.
 I am a sinner, Thou art the destroyer of sins.
 Thou art Lord of the helpless,
 Who is more helpless than I?
 There is none as distressed as me,
 And none to destroy this distress but Thee.
 Thou art Brahma, I am a jiva.
 Thou art master, I am servant.
 Thou art father, mother, guru, friend
 And well-wisher in all respects.
 From the different relationships between you and me,
 Acknowledge that which you prefer
 So that Tulsi can somehow take
 Shelter at your merciful feet.*

You must be able to relate your feelings for God to the mundane level. Am I the daughter of God? Am I the son of God? Am I a darling of God? Am I a beloved of God? Am I a wife of God? Am I a husband? Who am I? Your question is right, but the answer will take time. You may not even get the answer, but you have to constantly seek out what your connection with God is. I am sure that everyone has some connection with God; you are not disconnected. Once you realize that you will get everything.

I had that revelation after coming to Rikhia. Yes, definitely. Once I accepted God as my master, my mind became peaceful. If I am sleeping and my master calls out, "Wake up," I reply, "Yes master, what can I do for you?" He says, "Go and read the Ramayana." So I read the Ramayana. The Lord Himself has said:

*All creation is born of Me and all are dear to Me,
 But, of all creatures, human beings are more pleasing.
 Of all the human beings, the twice-born are dear,
 And of them, the knowers of the Vedas are dear,
 And of them, those who shape their lifestyle*

*According to the Vedic dharma are dear.
Amongst them, the renunciates are dear,
And of them, those who are jnanis are dear.
But, of all these, the most dear are my servants,
Who have no way or hope other than Me.*

To keep me as your servant is one way of relating to God. As a servant your feeling may be different. The relationship between Radha and Sri Krishna is good in theory, but in practice it does not suit the majority of people. Some may accept it if it suits them. This was the sentiment of Vidyapati:

*I was sleeping in my house
With a necklace round my neck.
At dawn my lover came to me.
With trembling hands he removed the necklace
And caressed my bosom with his lotus hands,
While staring at my moon-like face.
But sleep, the accursed enemy of my heart,
Did not allow me a glimpse of Govinda
Who is full of all the auspicious qualities.
Poet Vidyapati counsels you to have patience.
However heavily you irrigate the plants
They will bring forth fruit at the proper time.*

This *madhurya bhava* or *Radha bhava*, the feeling of a lover for the beloved, suits some people. Many sadhus wear saris, dance and sing; it comes naturally to them. Not everybody can have the same relationship with God. All the jivatmas, all the beings in this cosmos have a relationship with God; there is a connection. Everything that exists in the world, be it a flower, a leaf, a tree or whatever, is part of God. There is nothing in the universe which is not related to God. If that relationship is known, the feelings automatically arise and the ego-identification, the feeling that 'I am doing', becomes less and less prominent. Similarly, Kabir has said:

*When I was there, God was not,
When God is there, I am not.
The darkness has vanished
With the coming of light.*

If you put 'I' before 'Him', there will be only darkness. Kabir has also said:

*So long as I spoke only I, I, I,
I did not recognize the Creator.*

What if one feels you to be God?

To establish or to discover a relationship with a living human being as God is not impractical or untrue, but it has its drawbacks. For example, if you feel that I am God and then you see so many shortcomings and limitations in me, you will be disillusioned. God has no limitations but man has many. A person living in the body should have limitations; there is no incarnation in life without limitations. A person who has a body has limitations. Once you enter a body you are a product of *prakriti*, or nature, and there is interaction between the karmas. Without karma you cannot be born. Whether I am an incarnation of God is another matter, but if I am a human being I carry the personality of my parents, my society and my environment. So, naturally, you cannot say that any human being is perfect.

However, if you have the capacity to close your eyes to that human limitation and imperfection, you can also consider any living being to be God. You just have to close your eyes so that you see no fault in me, so that you see nothing but divinity and glory in me. To see God in a living being is the easiest way, but it has its drawbacks. It is very risky because every being born in a human body has his own karma, *svabhava* or innate nature, his own personality and limitations, and you may not like some of them.

You all have your own likes and dislikes and, therefore, I may come within the gambit of your dislike and criticism.

If that happens, then your entire faith will be shattered and broken; a spiritual disaster will take place. So, if you wish to consider me as God, then you will have to be prepared to ignore all of my limitations. Sri Krishna was an incarnation of God and he also had his limitations. He was a very naughty boy and used to steal, tell lies, beat people and tease all the girls.

Was Christ also like that?

Christ had a different life; he led more or less the life of a puritan. Sri Krishna did not lead the life of a puritan. Rama led the life of a puritan, but Sri Krishna was a Casanova, not a puritan. Sri Krishna was full of fun, but today millions and millions sing his name. Someone sang the kirtan 'Radhe Krishna Govinda' just now. Radha was not Sri Krishna's wife. She was a young girl who was near to his age, the daughter of the local chieftain. They fell in love with each other when Sri Krishna was ten or eleven. A small boy falling in love with a girl of fifteen or sixteen, can you imagine! But people have closed their eyes to that perversion of prakriti, of nature, and say that Sri Krishna was pure.

When the girls used to take a bath in the swimming pool, Sri Krishna would pick up their clothes and run away to a tree. When they said to him, "Give us our clothes," he would say, "Come and get them yourself. Why don't you come?" They would reply, "How can we come? We are naked." He would insist, "You have to come naked, only then will I give you your clothes." When the individual souls approach God, they have to come naked. Our clothes are our karma. We must shed all our karmas, then go before the Lord. This was Sri Krishna's life, but today we worship him. We have overlooked all the other aspects of his life, that he told lies, hit other children, teased the girls and stole things.

Sri Krishna used to go into people's houses with his friends and steal all the butter, milk and curd. If anybody said, "He's stealing!" Sri Krishna would say, "If you tell my mother I'll beat you!" He would threaten the whole village,

saying, “If anyone complains to my mother I’ll just destroy him.” That was the kind of boy he was, but the young girls living in the area, who were Sri Krishna’s devotees during his lifetime, worshipped him because he had divine talents. He was no ordinary boy; he had divine powers even as a child. In every sphere Sri Krishna proved that he had superhuman powers, so they overlooked his pranks and worshipped him as a divine being.

Sri Krishna is considered to be a complete, not partial, incarnation of God. Therefore, you can consider a man as God. You can worship him and give yourself totally to him, mentally, emotionally, psychically, spiritually and in every way. The mind then becomes quiet. I can tell you that there is no joy in life unless your mind becomes quiet. Sri Krishna says in the Gita (2:71): “That man attains peace, who lives devoid of longings, free from all desires, without the feeling of I and mine.”

The mind should become quiet, not through laziness, but by being active and aware of someone or something. When you love somebody, your mind is concentrated on that person all the time. When you love a child or a man, you feel pleasure and happiness. Your mind is preoccupied with that person all the time and you are full of bhakti, love and joy. Otherwise there is no joy in this world. With children, brothers, sisters and mother there are always problems. Although there may be no problem, somehow we make problems. So, one has to give one’s mind to something on which it must stick, just like Fevicol. The mind should not come out. Regarding this the poet Thakur has said:

*This is the nature of our heart.
We cannot leave this habit by any means.
Let those mad eyes be burnt
That want to see the fair-skinned
Instead of the black-skinned one.*

Suppose some of us also wish to try this master-servant relationship. Isn't the servant always outside and separate from God?

If I have the feeling that I am a servant, I do not have to worry. The servant does not have to worry. He just has to carry out his orders. A servant has no accountability, no responsibility. He just has to do his duty and not think too much. I do not have to be anxious or worried. If He gives me an order I will do it, then things become easy. When I was asked to come here, it was the 8th of September. The property was in our hands on the 12th of September, in just four days, although I was far away in the south-west of India. We acquired the property on the other side of the road only after we had been living here for over a year. Swami Niranjan negotiated the transfer of that property. It took one year despite the fact that the villagers wanted to transfer it. I didn't have to worry. I just told Swami Satsangi, "That is the kind of place where I have to go, so please ask Swami Niranjan if he can arrange it for me. I'll go and stay there." She arrived here on the 9th of September, phoned Swami Niranjan, and on the 10th the property was negotiated. They went to Calcutta because the local courts were on strike. In Calcutta they made the Title Deed, the deed of ownership, according to the Transfer Deed Act. On the 12th it was done. On the 14th I was informed that the property had been acquired and I could leave. Things happen on their own.

Then I came here. I did not even know that the date I arrived was 23rd September. It was only a month later that I realized that on that date day and night are equal, and that this is a place of balance. I did not know where to put the *dhuni*, the sadhana fireplace. I was standing here and I saw a very big serpent, twelve feet long, which circumambulated the whole property. I said, "Well, this is the place for the fires." Things become so easy that you don't have to think or struggle. When it is God's will, everything is easy. When it is man's will, then you have to struggle. A devotee has said:

*Who can tell, and how, and to whom,
The secret of the heart?
While searching for the Lord
My heart was lost,
And now the Lord is visible everywhere.*

Are you advocating the servant relationship first and saying that self-realization will come naturally?

No. I have no desire for self-realization. I had that desire originally when I was ignorant. I would talk of samadhi and self-realization, what you read in books, but not now. I have no choice. If He gives me self-realization, it is up to Him. If He doesn't, it is also up to Him. But personally I no longer have any desire for spiritual attainment. I had that desire before and it was very strong. I know many sadhanas because I have read books and taught people. Before coming here I had all those karmas, but after coming here it became clear in my mind, and now it is very clear. If you have passion or fear in your mind, you know you have it. You do not have to prove it; it is there.

Similarly, I am His servant; I have that feeling and I do not have to prove it to anyone. And so there is no question of self-realization. I am not here for self-realization. I am not here for acquiring siddhis or what you call spiritual attainment. I am not here to live a very divine, spiritual or religious life. I did come here for that but that is not my attitude any more. In the *Srimad Bhagavata*, Maitreya has also said:

*When the Lord is pleased,
Nothing is difficult to attain in the world.
He is capable of fulfilling all the longings.
Then what is the necessity of petty desires?
The Lord Himself awards His own highest post
To those who constantly remember His name
With the feeling of oneness.*

On 14th July 1989, He told me one thing: “Twenty-one thousand and six hundred times”. That is His order and I am trying to fulfil it by adjusting the weaknesses and strengths of my body. I find it difficult and I try very hard to adjust. It is not easy. For that I have to give up everything including food, drink, toilet, bath and sleep. To do japa twenty-one thousand and six hundred times every day, one has to leave everything. Otherwise how is it possible? It is not possible.

Swamiji, is yoga advantageous in bhakti marga?

Where yoga ends, bhakti begins. In some kinds of bhakti, yoga may be necessary, but in my bhakti, yoga is not necessary because a servant has no choice. I do pranayama because that is His instruction. I do pranayama for two months of the year only, in the early morning hours during January and February.

Sage Patanjali has said, *Yogaschitta vritti nirodhah* – “Yoga is the control of the modifications of the mind.” Yoga is for the body and mind. Yoga is certainly a very good tool to prepare yourself, there can be no two opinions about it. I am not underrating the greatness, importance or power of yoga, but it is not my path. In fact, I have forgotten yoga now. Sometimes I have to think, “What was that chakra?” I used to know everything by heart, all the books and slokas, but now I have to think. I can’t even remember the Gita. I have a very good memory. I have memorized the Vedas, the Koran and so on, I can recite them all. I have read Persian and Arabic. But now I cannot remember everything and that is good. It is very important to forget all the worldly things. Why should I remember them now? What importance do they have for me?

How can samadhi be attained by doing sadhana?

Samadhi is for those who have a desire for it. What sadhana will a servant do? The work of a servant is to serve his master. He can wash his clothes, cook and serve his food, and clean

his utensils. Sometimes he also has to wash the clothes of the mistress. That's all the work he can do. About the role of a servant Kabir has said:

*A servant should remain always in service.
He should not go elsewhere until the end.
Kabir says contemplatively,
He should bear affluence and adversity equally.*

After reaching this stage what is the next step of your sadhana?

I have not thought about it. I have no desire to attain further stages. What will I do with them? The bliss that you attain in bhakti is through the dual relationship. The devotion which exists between the *jiva* and *Brahma*, the devotee and his God, arises from the dual relationship, and there is delight in that. When the two unite, who will experience the joy of it? That is why I do not want to attain samadhi. That is why my path is different. I am on the path that He has told me to follow. If He asks me to change my path tomorrow, I will do so. What difference will it make to me in my life?

In *dasya bhava bhakti*, devotion of a servant to his master, there is no need to rack your brains. You make an agreement to serve God for, say four hundred rupees, no bonuses or dividends. He will ask whether you agree to serve Him fulltime? Yes. Whether you have a wife and children? No. Then you can join the service and stay at Ganesha Kutir. Kabir says:

*To whom I gave the mind, I gave all.
I offered my body together with the mind.
The poet Kabir says,
What now remains to be offered?*

You will have to work whenever you are asked to do so. Excuses such as being in samadhi, that kundalini is rising or that sahasrara chakra is working are not permissible. They are not on the syllabus of a servant. Attachments and

talking are not part of a servant's duty. The duty of a servant is to carry out the master's instruction. You have been given only two instructions and until you fulfil them you will not be given a third. If you have not been able to fulfil the two instructions you were given twenty-four hours ago, think about how you can fulfil them. Again Kabir Das has said:

*A servant should be called a servant
Only when he remains in service.
Kabir says that, without service,
A servant cannot be a servant.*

According to navadha bhakti, dasya bhava is the seventh form of bhakti. After that there are two more forms – sakhya bhava, or friendship with God, and atmanivedan, or self-surrender. Why have you chosen dasya bhava instead of sakhya bhava?

God as my friend? For God's sake, no! I do not want to make God my friend. I have heard about *navadha bhakti*, the nine forms of devotion, but I do not understand it. I have read in books about shravana and kirtan and ultimately reaching a state of ecstasy, but this is only a minute portion of the feeling. In this regard, it has been said in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

*Hearing and singing the praise of Vishnu,
His remembrance and service of his feet,
Worshipping, salutation and servitude
Together with friendship and self-surrender,
Are the nine kinds of devotion.*

I consider myself to be God's slave, His Majesty's slave, the slave of the servant of God. The relationship that I have with God is the ultimate relationship for me. But this is not the only relationship with God; many other relationships can be established. Whichever relationship you establish with God, do not do it through books. Make feeling and emotion your medium. What do you feel? Inside you feel incomplete, don't you? Surdas has said:

*There is none more crooked,
 None more villainous and lustful than I.
 O most kind Lord, it is not hidden from You.
 You are the knower of every heart.
 I am so disloyal that I forgot Him
 Who created this body of mine.
 I am such a lustful boar,
 That I always run after sensory pleasure.
 I am always negligent in attending satsang,
 But take delight in the objects of the senses.
 Abandoning the feet of Lord Hari,
 I serve those who are against Him.
 I am a sinner of the highest order,
 A shameful, wretched culprit,
 Most infamous of all the contemptible people.
 Surdas prays to the Lord,
 Who is the Saviour of the wretched
 And who is also the Lord of Lakshmi.*

I am the worthless son of God. There is no one as disobedient and wicked as me. But every day God provides me with rotis and I go to the cinema and celebrate. God thinks, "Oh, Swami Satyananda is a very big man. Who knows that he makes merry by watching movies and gambling?" The feeling of being incomplete and unworthy is of great value to God. To think that you are devotional and pure because you bathe every day and worship your tulsi plant is egoism, not devotion. All this is ritual. Therefore, it is very important to have a spontaneous relationship with God which is as natural as your feelings.

If you really look within, you will see that there is no one as unworthy as yourself. God has given you your life, your body, and all you think about is making money twenty-four hours a day. To keep God happy every morning, you ring a bell! You observe a fast on Ekadashi because you fear that He will take away your son, daughter or husband, or that some other misfortune may befall you. You are afraid of Him,

and because you are afraid you worship Him. For whatever reason, at least you do it. It has been said in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

*That untouchable is highest
On whose tongue Your name remains.
Others who pronounce the name of the Lord
Are expected to perform austerities,
Fire sacrifice, bathing in holy places,
All kinds of auspicious behaviour.*

We are so bad, so selfish, so ungrateful. God has given us everything and we do not have any time to serve Him, to remember Him. We make so many excuses: today there is a marriage and tomorrow the in-laws are coming; our son has exams. One hundred types of excuses. Aren't we being dishonest? We are trying to fool even God and He does not understand this. So, instead, we should say to God, "I am a very mean and selfish person, I am not true to You, but whatever I am, I am Yours. Now that you understand my true nature, lead me to salvation. Either make me sit in Your lap, make me a good person, or make me a drunkard or a gambler." This is the truth. So, in the *Mahabharata*, Duryodhana says:

*I know what dharma is,
But I have no inclination towards it.
I know what adharma is,
But I cannot check myself from that.
It appears that I am directed
By a God residing in my heart
And never do as I am directed by Him.*

You have to search for your relationship with God. One day you will know your relationship with God and then bhakti yoga will start. Shukdeoji says in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

*Be it of desire, anger or fear,
Of love, oneness or friendship,*

*If connection is made with the Lord daily,
Then absorption in the Lord is bound to occur.*

Is kirtan a good way of connection with the Lord?

Naam kirtan is singing God's name for one to one and a half hours, fast not slow, but with peace not noise. This is the real kirtan. This tradition of kirtan is very ancient. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu developed and taught this concept. He used to say that the only path to salvation in this Kali yuga is singing the name of the Lord and nothing else. In the *Ramacharitamanas* it has also been said:

*The name of Rama is the bestower
Of all desired things in this Kali yuga.
It is like father and mother in this world,
And the greatest benefactor in the next.
Karma, bhakti and discrimination
Are not necessary in Kali yuga.
The only reliable thing is the name of Rama.*

In Munger we used to have many kirtans, but I observed that most of the time during kirtan the dholak and other instruments made a lot of noise whereas they should only be used to give the beat. When kirtan is sung there should be a change towards one-pointedness and *shanti*, peace. I sing alone here, but singing alone is not naam kirtan. Naam sankirtan is when ten, twenty-five, thirty people sit down and sing God's name. Singing the story of God is also very important. In the *Ramacharitamanas*, Lord Shiva explains the importance of the story of Rama:

*That man achieves fulfilment of his desires,
Who sings this story abandoning desires and deceit.
Those who listen to it and recommend it,
Cross this world-ocean like the footprints of a cow.
O Girija, I have described the story of Rama,
Which is able to alienate the filth of Kali yuga
And also to erase the defects of the mind.*

Swamiji, we feel blessed when you call us. Will you call us again soon?

Why don't you all come here, shave your heads and stay on? What does it matter! But it can't be like that. You have forgotten why you came into this world. Circumstances have forced you to work, to study, to write, to have children, and now that is your life. Whether you like it or not, you have to bear with it. You are like the bullock; whether he likes it or not, he has to pull the cart because the task master is sitting behind. I set the goal for my life fifty years ago and I have faced many difficulties and problems in attaining that goal. I have had to change my direction many times, but I have achieved my goal.

Now I have attained ananda I have found my path. While travelling on a train one meets many people on the platform or in the waiting room, but how many people can you feel love and affection for? This temporary love and affection happens only in transit houses and there is nothing much to it. This temporary feeling cannot become a part of you. It has been said in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

*O mother, the assembly of living beings
Is like the assembly of persons at a well.
They assemble for a short period and then disperse.
Similarly, living beings come together and disperse
By virtue of their previous karmas.*

There is only one truth in the world, God or Ishwara. I am not concerned with whether you call it Atman, Param-atman, Shiva or Rama. There is one Ishwara and every person has to find his personal relationship with Him. For a brief period there is guru between you and your God. This is necessary because you need a guide, but it is not right to become attached to your guide. There is a very limited role for the guru on this path which all of you are on. Gurus are not of one type; they are like teachers. One teacher teaches one subject, another teaches another subject. Every teacher has his own area. Hence the guru or teacher who shows you the spiritual

path has a limited role. To remain attached to the guru is like a brahmin and his follower drowning together. The guru and disciple will both go down if they remain attached.

*The Brahmin sank himself
And made his followers sink with him.
Both alike were doomed.*

You have to establish a relationship with your master, who is your inner self, who is within you, who is the breath of your breath, who is the life force in you, who is the essence of your life, and on whom your life depends. It has been said in the *Kenopanishad*:

*The disciple as well as the master himself,
Is the ear of the ear, the eye of the eye,
The speech of the speech, the mind of the mind
And the life of the life.*

The aim of life is to establish a relationship with Him and to abide by it, to sit in satsang and to be in the company of saints. If you can develop this awareness or knowledge, then your aim is clear. While travelling to Bombay or Calcutta, you can drink tea, eat peanuts and read newspapers on the way; nobody will stop you, but that is not your aim. The aim is to reach Bombay. In the *Srimad Bhagavata*, Sri Krishna says to Uddhava:

*Whatever actions are performed by this body
Which is under the control of destiny,
Whether they be mental or physical,
Are all due to the three attributes.
However, those people who are devoid of jnana
Take these actions to be their own performance,
And thus they fall into eternal bondage.
But those who are well-versed in bhakti or jnana
Spend their life preoccupied and immersed in Me.
They consider siddhis as obstacles in their way
Because time is fruitlessly wasted in obtaining them.*

There are many distractions on the spiritual path: children, household chores, job, money, but these are not the aim of life. They are the means, but not the end. Life is the means to achieve the end. Wife, children, money, joy and sorrow, success and failure, loss and gain are all the means, but not the end. There is only one ultimate aim. What is that ultimate aim? People have forgotten it. I have always said that we are all self-centred. We have cheated the being who has given us this body. Such self-centredness! A saint has said, "I proved so disloyal that I forgot Him who created me." Most of our time is spent in making money, but bhakti is like the desire of a man for a woman. He thinks about her in the office, in the toilet, while sleeping, all the time. Kabir Das says the same thing in another way:

*One should always remember the Lord,
As water bearers are aware of their water pot.
Kabir says, after giving thought to it,
That water bearers may talk and walk,
But their attention never leaves the pot.
One should always remember the Lord
As the cow recalls her calf.
Kabir says that even while grazing,
The cow never forgets her calf.
One should always remember the Lord
As a passionate man imagines the object of passion.
Kabir declares it openly to all alike
That then and only then will Rama be pleased.*

I will give you another example. When you think about someone whom you hate and consider to be your enemy, the feeling is very intense. Even though you continue to do your daily work, that person is constantly on your mind. The thought of that person is always with you, embedded in your consciousness. Similarly, while living a material life, man should be constantly aware of God. This is known as *bhakti marga*, the path of devotion. Do pooja if you have time, otherwise it is not important. Bhakti is above pooja.

I am not saying that you should stop your daily pooja, but the bhakti which I am talking about begins when there is an end to pooja.

What is bhakti? Real love and bhakti are one. Sufi saints call it *ishk hakiki*. Real love and bhakti are the inner path which everyone can think of. Worries bother you constantly. Sorrow, love, hate, likes and dislikes are always there, you are constantly surrounded by them. Similarly, the thought of God should be constantly with you, as much as possible. This is the only truth, the rest is nothing! In the *Srimad Bhagavata*, Narada says to Vasudeva:

*Shishupal, Paundrak, Shalva and other kings
Remembered Lord Krishna by way of enmity.
They observed His movements, merry-making
And other activities with that feeling.
That also they did not do at a regular time,
But while sleeping, sitting and moving.
In this way they became one with the Lord
And thus obtained salvation through this identity.*

Satsang 26

4 December 1994

Last year you said, “God is good.” Could you speak about your personal experience?

I have not seen God as you understand the word ‘seeing’, but I have felt and also heard Him. It is not just a belief. In fact, I have been a student of both western and eastern philosophy, and have always thought about God in my mind. There was a time when I was an atheist also, but that was a temporary phase. After all, when we say God does not exist, what proof have we got? Nobody can prove that God exists or that God does not exist. Atheism has no proof and theism has no proof. I have had clear instructions in life. But then I did not think that it was a divine instruction or a divine commandment. I thought it was my oversoul, my higher mind. I was involved in kundalini yoga and other yogas, so I thought that my higher mind was speaking.

Was it your guru’s command?

Yes, I have heard my guru’s command, but I have heard those commands which are beyond the mind, which are in the depth of my consciousness. I heard them when I was not even aware of my own existence. I have had many experiences. To give you one example, on the 14th of July 1989, I arrived at Nasik, which is near Bombay. About thirty kilometres from Nasik is Trayambakeshwar, the source of the river Godavari, where there is one of the twelve jyotirlingams

of Shiva. I had a small hut and I was completely free from all my responsibilities. I asked a question, “What am I to do now? I have nothing to do with yoga, with preaching, or with anything else. I am a sannyasin, a free bird. I have no more missions to perform.”

*I am the bird of the vast expanse of the sky,
I am the continuous flow of nectar,
I am completely quiet, blissful and eternal,
I am a luminous star of bliss.*

I sat down and gradually my mind sank and I lost consciousness. Then a storm came – a cyclone, thunder, rain, lightning. I experienced it all within me. Within or without is all the same, it is just a concept. I am talking in terms of time and space, I am not talking in terms of the body or the individual. When we talk, sometimes we speak about time and sometimes about space. “Twenty-one thousand six hundred times” was the sound that came. Later, when I came out of that state, I knew what I had to do. I had been teaching so I had no difficulty in understanding this. I started my practice from that day.

Now the next question that came to me was, “Where am I to stay for the rest of my life?” or for as many years as possible. I had the choice of several places. One was a double cave in Gangotri, quite a big rock and an inlet, just on the bank of the Ganga. So when I went there, I asked about it and reserved it for myself. Then I went down to Rishikesh and stayed a few days in the ashram of my Guruji. The swamis there said, “Why don’t you stay here? We will make a kutir for you.” I said, “It is very fine, but somehow I don’t like Rishikesh. It is a holy place, but it is also a noisy place because it is very easy to get to. Go to Delhi, take a taxi and there you are. Anyone can go to Rishikesh without any difficulty.” So Rishikesh was out of the question.

The third place I went to was Mount Abu in Rajasthan. Near Mount Abu there is a hillock called Guru Shikkhar. Lord Dattatreya’s footprints are there and there is also a

temple devoted to his father and mother, Atri and Anasuiya. At the foot of that hillock there is a branch of the Niranjani Akhara, the akhara to which I belong. But there was the problem of water, because a paramahansa must stay where there is plenty of water. That is the rule. Water, fire and pure air are our requirements. So I was struggling to find a place. I had a lot of friends to help me, including the forest officers in Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. I said, "Please find a cave for me somewhere."

On the 8th of September 1989, I woke at about two o'clock in the early morning, made a little tea, took my bath and sat down. My mind sank again. There was total quiet, and I remember there was moonlight, like you have on the tenth or the eleventh day before the full moon. Then the instruction came, "In the burial ground." That was all – burial ground. The question in my mind had been, "Where am I going to stay?" At once I understood the meaning of what I had heard, for in this context the Deoghar area is considered to be the *chitabhoomi*, the burial ground. In Vedic mythology and in the Puranas, particularly the *Shiva Purana*, there are references to 'chitabhoomi', which is the Deoghar area you are now visiting. When He said chitabhoomi, He meant this place, which is considered to be the burial ground, not of Shiva but of Sati.

That day was the 8th of September, the birthday of my guru, Swami Sivananda. At about seven o'clock, Swami Satsangi arrived from Munger with prasad. I said to her, "You don't have to stay here. Go back immediately. I have seen a place near Deoghar. Please go there and find it."

There have been so many other instances which I have attributed to my super mind, higher mind, deeper mind, greater mind or whatever you wish to call it. But now I will not make that mistake. This is my God who guides me. He has guided me from childhood. At the age of six I had a very frightening experience. I could see my body but I could not feel it. I could see my fingers, my knees, everything, but there was no feeling. There was no

connection between existence and cognition, awareness. It was frightening, a real fear.

My parents consulted many people, including the sannyasins and healers of that time. Fortunately, we had no any mental hospitals in those days, otherwise I would have been placed in one because my symptoms were abnormal. This experience also came again. Finally, a great lady saint, Anandamayī Ma, saved me. She said, “Nothing is wrong. The serpent is now shedding its skin, that’s all. Let him sing kīrtan.” From that time on I started singing kīrtan. I used to sing kīrtan day and night. Singing kīrtan rhythmically for two to three hours was very joyful. The mind goes so deep you do not want to come out, because the bliss in music and in God’s name mix very nicely. Then my symptoms went away and I lived a very normal life.

Later I left home and went to Swami Sivananda. I asked him many questions about my experiences and about spiritual life. He only said, “You can’t see your face in the mirror unless the mirror is clean. You have to clean the mirror first. The base should be ready. What is the use of doing all kinds of sadhana when you are blind? You have *avidya*, ignorance, *ajnana*, lack of wisdom; you don’t have spiritual eyes, inner eyes. You want to see the reality with the physical eyes, but it is not possible, so do karma yoga.” Well, I did karma yoga and it yielded positive results. Service to guru is certainly a very important part of spiritual life and should never be underestimated.

*There is no scarcity in the court of the Master,
But the disciples do not act according to their will,
And there is no fault in the act of service.
Everything is accessible through the grace of Guru,
But, according to destiny, the disciple receives his due.
The disciple should be filled with love,
And ready to serve the feet of the Guru day and night.*

On the day of sannyasa, Swami Sivananda said, “I am teaching you, but don’t practise yet because you are not

ready. If you practise now, something will go wrong, an accident will take place.” He said this forty to forty-five years ago. He gave me one example: “Supposing you come to the railway station three hours before the arrival of the train, what are you going to do? Wait, pass the time, read newspapers and drink tea, or spend the time in the waiting room. The train will come at the right time.”

My train came forty to forty-five years later. During the interim period I was given very clear instructions. The first instruction was about Australia, and that is why I had great success in Australia. Then came Denmark, Sweden, Italy and Greece – I had very clear instructions throughout. So whether or not I have seen God is immaterial. I do not crave to see Him because I know that all forms are His form and, at the same time, He has no form. Similarly, Kabir Das has said:

*How can I describe the beauty of love,
When I am completely merged in its splendour?
The dye in which I have been coloured
And the grace which I have experienced,
Have intoxicated me so that I forget
Everything including my body and mind.*

When can we have your darshan in the future?

I am not here for darshan. If I were, then Munger would have been a better place because it can provide more facilities. I have come here to live in seclusion. The life that I have adopted and the sadhana I need to do, according to the paramahansa tradition, calls for solitude; neither father nor mother, guru nor disciple, caste nor creed, only Shivoham, Shivoham. There is no guru-disciple relationship here. Whenever it is God’s will, as it was this year, then an invitation will reach you from Munger.

I do not do anything here; I simply live in seclusion. The establishment belongs to someone else. I thought of doing panchagni for five years, because the sankalpa for panchagni is for five, seven, twelve years or even a lifetime. I planned to

do it for five years this time. The five years will end on Karka Samkranti this year. After this a new chapter in my sadhana has to begin. So before that happens, I thought I would meet people for this month of Marga Sheersha. It is a good month and so I have kept it separate. The sadhana program that I was doing earlier is over. Now, in the future, I do not know what the will of God will be. If it is His decree, then you will be invited to come and if not, then just remain at home. Do not come unless you are called. This much I want to say.

There is another area behind this property and I will be shifting there. To reach it one has to knock on two gates instead of one. Even people living inside the property cannot come near me. I have a ferocious dog who bites and that is why nobody can come into this area. I live here alone. The swamis all live on the other side. They do not dare enter here because of the dog; you can ask anyone. Bholenath is a very lucky dog; he came with very good karma.

When I do japa he sits by my side all the time. He knows when three hours have gone by. He comes and licks my face and when I don't respond, then he rubs his head on me which means, "Get up, get up." This is necessary because if I do not change my position every three hours then I will have problems with my knees. I play ball with him for ten minutes, then I sit down again. I cook his food and do everything for him. So, people don't come here anymore. All the swamis have got Bhole's mark. Some of them may say that he is their friend, but Bholenath is nobody's friend.

We have a Bholenath Readymade store here in which there are many lovely things. Toys, bats and balls are kept for children. Clothes and ornaments are for the girls when they marry and go to live in their husband's house. There is a rule that paramahamsas do not have anything to do with death or marriage, but when a girl goes to her husband's house, we present her with a full set of clothes and ornaments. When the girl goes to her husband for the second time, we present her with a Bangalore sari, mangalasutra, sindoor, brassiere, blouse and good ornaments – some girls even get a diamond!

We also give gifts to girls before marriage, on the occasion of *tika*. The girls are beautiful and they are our daughters. Karmas accumulate birth after birth; who is your daughter or son is unaccountable and unwritten. Bholenath says, “If you do not want sons and daughters, then provide for a girl as you would for your own daughter and exhaust your karmas, because responsibility for the daughter only extends during the time she is unmarried. Once she is married then all obligations to her are taken over by her husband.” That is how we look at it in India.

Bholenath’s Readymade Store is always full. There are blankets for each member of the family and we make them into a bundle. There is a complete list ready for all the villages. The swamis take the bundles in a truck or tractor and give them as prasad, not as charity. When you go to a temple you receive prasad. In the same way, when you do sadhana there is distribution of prasad. There are various types of rishis – *rajarishi*, *devarishi*, *brahmarishi*. I belong to the category of *rajarishi*, the royal swami, or as I used to be called, the five-star swami. So, my prasad has to be that befitting a *rajarishi*.

The population of India is nine hundred million. If each person gave one blanket, then nine hundred million blankets would come. Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, is my mother and she has already told me, “Satyananda, if you live properly, then I will fulfil your wishes, but if you don’t then I will leave you.” So I have instructed myself to live carefully. The divine gifts of Lakshmi should not be used for myself. If somebody gives a watch or a nice shawl and you wear it yourself, then you are a bad person.

When you think about others only, not about yourself, then Lakshmi becomes very happy. But when you think about yourself and not about others, she says, “This boy doesn’t have a good character”, and so saying, she leaves him. Goddess Lakshmi has another rule. If you want to call her, then simply call Narayana, because Goddess Lakshmi is ever faithful and follows her husband unswervingly. She will come in Narayana’s vehicle which is Garuda, not Maruti.

However, if you want her to come alone, then she will arrive and depart riding the owl, which is her vehicle.

This year Swami Nirranjan has added another item to the program – donation of cows and bulls, which is very necessary for farmers. The cow is the only animal whose waste products are perfectly hygienic. No other creature, or even machine, has this quality. A waste product is always a waste product, whether it is industrial waste or animal waste. Not only the waste product, but the environment around the cow is also very hygienic. To keep cows it is necessary to have a big house. It can be made of mud or straw, or it may be dilapidated, but it must be a big house. If you are not able to keep a cow, that is another matter. People who live in flats cannot keep cows. In the Vedic tradition, it is believed that all the *devīs* and *devatās*, the illumined beings, reside in the cow. It is very interesting that all over the world, the cow is the only animal whose waste material is considered to be totally pure.

Where I live a treatment program is being conducted using cow's urine. It has been running for twenty days and thousands of people have taken advantage of it. What is your idea regarding this type of therapy?

In my time there was a practice which these days many are not aware of. At the time of menses, women would drink cow's urine, which means that cow's urine affects the hormonal system of human beings. There is no better gift in the whole world than a cow. A cow is the greatest gift that you can give, whether for a birthday, for Christmas or for any other reason, whether you consider the cow to be holy, or useful, or whatever. It has been said in *Padmapurana*:

*Cows are the relatives of human beings
And human beings are the relatives of cows.
A house in which there are no cows
Is a house without relatives.*

For an Indian farmer, a cow is a must. A list has been drawn up of people in this vicinity suffering from TB. To date,

thirty people have come for treatment, so we have given out thirty cows. These poor people cannot eat mutton every day, but now they can drink milk. Of course, people have bad habits, but so far no one has cheated me. Someone who attempted to get cheated too. I am a virtuous man in this respect, without any selfishness, with no schemes or ulterior motives. I act in accordance with the will of God. In Munger, I used to give blankets. Later it was discovered that the blankets were being sold. Then the distribution of blankets had to be stopped and all their problems started.

It is not that I have the capacity to make curses; I am a very good man. My mind is very clear; I cannot even think anything evil about anybody. Even if someone comes to my house to steal, I will treat him like a friend. What difference does it make? You may steal my camera, my tape recorder, my TV, my money, but you cannot steal my faith. As long as you cannot steal my faith, you can steal nothing of mine, because faith is my wealth. I have read all sorts of books on eastern philosophy and western dialectical materialism, but I do not believe in it. Reason is not the helper, reason is the barrier, and I have transcended it. Faith is my wealth, innocent faith like a child.

Do you believe in the worship of Tulsi?

I do it regularly and I like it very much. Such worship does not require a good intellect, but it requires a good heart. One who has neither a good intellect nor a good heart, know him to be a poor, deprived person. One who has a good intellect but no heart is like a fancy sweet shop where the sweets lack sweetness. What can you really do with a high intellect? Do you love your wife with your intellect or your heart? Is hate for your enemy intellectual or emotional? Love, hate, mercy and lust are all manifestations of the heart, not the intellect.

You can say, "The world was created, there is matter, therefore, there should be God." Your approach may be epistemological, theological or ontological; all these approaches are intellectual. God is. You can't prove it and

you can't disprove it. You may believe it or not. Nobody is forcing you to believe that God exists. The best thing, therefore, is to make God a matter of the heart. Spiritual life, sadhana, bhakti or God are matters of the heart, not the intellect. You can approach them easily with feeling and faith. When you want to write books, use the intellect, but when you want to feel for yourself, the heart is best.

That is why I worship Tulsi twice a day. I made her the *ishta devi*, the tutelary deity, of my akhara. There is only one prayer I submit to her: "Keep me healthy as long as I practise spiritual life. The moment you see there is something wrong and that I have moved away from spiritual life, take this body away." What is the use of this body? It is a 1923 model and there are many later models – Marutis, BMWs, Suzukis; it cannot be of any use to others. Only one thing is possible now, which I say every day, though I do not ask Tulsiji, because I am not in the habit of asking God.

I think it is unnecessary to ask God for everything. Why ask Him? God has already given me everything. What He has not given me, I do not deserve. God did not give me a wife. God said, "My son, you do not need a wife. Pray enjoy this freedom." Now, if I ask, "O God, give me a wife," then it will be very problematical. He will then say, "I will have to change your whole file now and make a lot of adjustments, ask the chief minister here, the prime minister there. The whole constitution will have to be changed." What God did not give me was for the simple reason that I did not need it. If this applies to me, surely it applies to you.

Giridhari Purwar had five daughters and no son, but now he has many grandsons and granddaughters. I told him that God did not give him a son because he did not need one. Now he and his wife are free, their daughters have married and gone to their husbands' houses and have their own children. He teaches yoga with ease, sometimes travelling to Madras, Nepal or Singapore. Both husband and wife are now very happy moving from place to place. Is this not a matter of joy? A daughter is never a shackle on the feet, but a son

is. Now, after so many years, they understand this. When Giridhari had small children, I told him, "What God has not given, you really do not need. So there is no point in asking me to file a petition before God, to perform some miracle which will not happen."

It was the same with Swami Niranjan's mother, Dharma-shakti. The doctors said that she would never be able to conceive. Many years ago I went to Gangotri with Dharma-shakti and Satyabrat, Swami Niranjan's father. At that time he said to me, "Swamiji, please give her something." I said, "There is no child in her destiny, but there is one in mine." However, he kept asking me; it was purely a joke. So I said, "Okay, make a resolve that you will give that child to me and not keep it for yourself," and so the resolve was made. If they had taken Niranjan, then he would not have survived, because Niranjan is my *manas putra*, mind born son.

You never have to ask God for all these things. You beg God for something because you are impatient and ignorant. God knows everything and He knows your needs. How strange that you think you know what you need, but God does not. The fact is that God knows everything about us. He is the mind of our minds, the prana of our pranas, the thought of our thoughts. God is the indweller. He also digests our food; you only chew and swallow it. Who does the rest? Who makes the blood, bones, fat and excreta? Who creates the energy? You do not do anything, so leave everything in His hands with pleasure.

*Keep me in happiness,
Keep me in suffering.
Whatever be Thy plan,
I am Thy instrument.
Thou art working through me.
Whatever position Thou givest me,
Whether it be high or low,
All is Thy will.
Thy will be done, my Lord!*

Surdas has also sung:

*I will live as You keep me,
You know the affluence and adversity of all.
Why should I speak with my mouth?
O my Lord, sometimes I get food
And sometimes I have to bear hunger.
Sometimes I ride a horse or a big elephant
And sometimes I have to carry a load.
I want to become the servant of Lord Krishna,
Who is lotus-eyed, dark like the cloud
And ever-enchancing to the mind.
Surdas says, O ocean of compassion,
Being a devotee of Yours
I long to catch hold of Your feet.*

Where do you live in winter?

Raghunath Kutir is my winter resort. It is very spacious and made purely of mud bricks. It is the prototype which we will be trying to build for the villagers here. I live like an emperor; no desires, no worries, that is the definition of an emperor. The mind is free. In fact, emperors are those who do not need anything. I live in Ganesha Kutir for four months and in Raghunath Kutir for four months. There is a winter house, an autumn house and a summer house. In the cities one must make do with a two room flat and a toilet, but in the villages, two rooms are not enough. A toilet is unnecessary; people take a small jug of water to their field and return after having looked after their needs. But the house should be spacious enough to keep cows, bullocks and goats, as well as food for the animals, wood, straw and husk.

How much does a cow cost?

I have no idea, but it doesn't cost very much. It depends on how much milk she gives and whether it is her first or second calf. There are many factors to consider. Swami

Satsangi knows about this and we also consult the local veterinary doctors. The cows are brought here from other districts by truck and train, about ten at a time. Then we consult the head of the village and find out who are the most deserving. Those people who have undergone treatment for tuberculosis should have first preference.

We have selected thirty TB patients for treatment. Some people from Bombay have taken charge of them. The medicines have already come, and when the doctors come from Bhagalpur in a few days' time, the medication will start. We treat children, pregnant women and young women. The cows will be given to them after their treatment, so that they will be able to improve their health. In the *Atharvaveda* it has been said about the cow:

*The cow is the mother of the twelve Adityas
And the daughter of the eight Vasus.
She is the life of the subjects
And the source of amrit or nectar.
She is the giver of sweet, golden ghee,
By virtue of which great vigour
Circulates in the body of the mortals.*

Cows will also be given to those who want to improve their lot. The attitude should not be one of charity. Our feeling regarding such affairs has to be spontaneously spiritual, not intellectually spiritual. How do I help my own brother? If my wife is sick, what do I do for her? If my father is sick, what do I do for him? I don't give charity to my father. If my mother or child is sick, do I give them charity? No, I give them my love, my feelings, my support. I do my duty towards them because I feel one with them. There is a feeling of unity on an emotional plane or a spiritual plane.

The level at which you feel unity depends upon your evolution. You may feel emotional or spiritual unity. We often hear the term 'spiritual union'. What is the meaning of it? Does it mean physical, mental, emotional or psychic union? Depending on your personal evolution, you have to find out

what it means to you. Because actually it is God who helps people. If somebody has to be helped somewhere in any part of the world through you, me or somebody else, it is He who is helping – I am only the medium.

Can you offer any advice on the problems of bringing up children in the present day world?

Nowadays it is really very difficult to rear children. Children have become the parents and they tell you what to do. There is a proverb: “The child is father to the man.” This problem is not so common in rural areas where the relationship between parents and children is well-established, but in the cities the son tells the father and mother what to do. It is true that most children think they know more than their parents, but that is not part of India’s rural culture.

Now that this place has been built, how long do you think you will remain here?

Everything you see here is the maya of Swami Satsangi and Swami Niranjan, not my maya. I just wanted a little hut, that is enough for me, but Swami Satsangi and Swami Niranjan have been trying to persuade me to develop the property. Whose friend is a sage? He is there for a while and then he moves on. I am not going to get entangled in anything. Whenever I feel like it, I will leave this too. If I could leave my father, what would it take to leave this?

The joy of leaving is far greater than the joy of connecting. One can leave spontaneously, whereas it takes many years to connect. What is involved in leaving? Just make up your mind and you are free. In reality, who belongs to whom? You accept something and so it becomes yours. You bring a stranger into your house, put a rubber stamp on her and call her your wife. Or you go to the house of a stranger, put a rubber stamp on him and call him your husband, and that is accepted.

Do you believe in the need to work or is it better to spend one's time in other pursuits?

Of course, a flat which has running water, electricity and a terrace garden is more comfortable to live in than a hut. However, if you live in a flat, you have to work. It is also very necessary to work in order to keep the mind preoccupied. When the mind is not preoccupied, then it occupies you. When the mind occupies you, it torments and molests you. When you are suffering from some illness, seventy-nine percent of the problem is mental, and only twenty-one percent has a physical basis.

Therefore, every sickness, whether it is diabetes, heart disease, cancer or even a cold, has a psychosomatic basis. No disease is purely physical. If you occupy your mind and forget the sickness for a short period, you will feel better. You think illness is due to a change in the weather, but you don't know when the weather has changed inside you. Suddenly you are aware that the wind has changed from a westerly to a southerly, and you think, "Oh, that's why I feel better today!" You don't realize that you have been preoccupied with your own affairs.

Occupying the mind is very necessary for mental, psychic and spiritual growth. This preoccupation is necessary, and that is the reason why God has created desire. What is desire? 'I want this', 'I want that' is desire. If you do not have desire, you will not be preoccupied. If you are not preoccupied with some desire, you will always be occupied by your mind. The mind will be playing havoc with you. Therefore, God has said, "Unless you become detached, unless you become a pure and true sannyasin, you should fulfil your desires!"

Desires should not be abandoned; desires must be fulfilled. Desires must be understood and channelled. Desires cannot be suppressed. If you knowingly suppress them, you are doing something very dangerous. There should be no suppression or repression. You should channel and rationalize your desires as far as possible. However, those desires which are related to the three basic drives

of man – the drive for sexual interaction, for progeny, and for prosperity, have to be fulfilled. There is a fourth drive also, which is the drive for name and fame, but it is not common to all. It only applies to people who want to achieve something, who want to become great leaders, actors or writers, who want to win the Pulitzer Prize or the Nobel Prize. Such people are few. Most people only have the threefold drives.

Sannyasins have strong wills. Those who can renounce these three drives by proper, rational methods, not by suppression, are known as sannyasins. Otherwise, if there is suppression, you will just explode like a bomb. However, if you do not have any desires at all, then you will become a total vegetable. Only when the stage of sannyasa is reached should you leave karma. You can neither renounce desire nor action, karma. Renunciation of desire and karma is very dangerous advice if anybody should give it to you.

How often should one sing?

A singer should sing every day. You eat every day, so why not sing every day? Bhajans are devoted to God and God is a lover of bhajans. There is always music in His court. Govinda is very fond of bhajans. Of course, you can also do pooja and chanting, but singing of bhajans should always be done.

*O Govinda, O Gopal,
Take me under your shelter.
Now I am losing the battle of life.
I went to the ocean to quench my thirst,
But the crocodile living within it
Threw me down while holding my feet.
For twelve hours I fought without ceasing,
But at last he took me into the midstream.
When I was submerged up to my nose and ears,
I called loudly to Lord Krishna to save me.
That loud voice reached all the way to Dwarka.
The Lord came at once riding on Garuda,*

*Bearing the conch, chakra, mace and lotus.
Surdas requests Shyam to come under His shelter.
O very dear to Nanda, take me this time too.*

Bhajans and kirtan are different. In kirtan, the singing and repeating of God's name is most important. Good teachings and good thoughts are conveyed through bhajans. Bhajans can also be singing God's glory in the form of a prayer, such as, "O God, giver of bliss, please give us knowledge." Singing the Lord's name is the most powerful form of music, bhakti and devotion. Just take a kartal or mridanga and sing for one hour, then you don't have to do japa, sit for meditation or do pooja. Just sing God's name, repeat it over and over again. That is *naam samkirtan*. God loves music and man loves music. While singing, forget everything, lose yourself. Any music in which you lose yourself, even commercial music, will do, provided you actually lose yourself. Sit in a convenient place in the house for one or two hours and sing, even if your mother-in-law does not like it. God will be happy. Narada says in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

*For those whose mind is always restless
And desires to indulge in sensory enjoyments,
The singing of the wonderful stories of the Lord
Is like a ship to cross the ocean of the world.*

My mother-in-law likes kirtan, but there is a lot of activity in the house so I do it within myself.

It is good to do it within yourself. Applying scent and flowers to your clothes is good, but sprinkle a little around the house also. God has given you a gift of singing. Not everybody can sing.

Satsang 27

5 December 1994

How many days will you be in India? For as many as I tell you to be? No, you should decide your own program. After 17th December, I will not meet anyone for the next year. I do not understand which world you live in. To be constantly leaning on someone is the source of all misery. Do you think I will not leave this world one day? This is the way of the world. Learn to be independent in your life. Man should get to know more about himself, his Lord, his *parameshwara*. I have called you now because I want to take leave of all of you. The leave that I had before this meeting was of a short duration. It is essential now that I take a long leave.

Therefore, I have called you to ensure that you do not knock on my door or send letters and money orders. I send all postal items back. I do not remember anyone now. Why should I remember you? What for? If people remember me, it is their weakness. I do not remember them. Was I born to remember people? Is that the aim of life? Did I leave home in order to remember people? Billions and billions of people like you have come and gone down through the ages. Does one cry over this fact? How many leaves have fallen from the tree? Can the fallen leaves be counted? Can the raindrops be measured? There is a poem by Harivansh Rai Bachchan:

Let bygones be bygones.

I realize the star was very dear to you,

*But if it is gone, let it go.
Look at the face of the sky.
Many of its stars have fallen to the ground
And many of its dearest ones departed.
Now tell me, when does the sky wail for them?*

*I realize that it was a cup of wine
For which you were ready to sacrifice your life,
But if it has broken, let it be broken,
Look around the premises of the bar;
Too many of its cups have broken
And too many of its vessels also.
Now tell me, when does the bar regret this loss?*

*I realize that there was a flower
For which you would do anything.
Even so, if it has faded, let it be.
Look at the scenery of Madhuvan.
Many of its beautiful buds have dried up
And many of its creepers have also faded away.
Those which dried up never blossomed again.
Now tell me, when does Madhuvan bewail this loss?*

In the same way, there is no tally of the likes of us who have come and gone in this vast eternal nature. We are not even a molecule or an atom in the cosmic perspective. Think of the immense size of the solar system. How minuscule is the earth in relation to it? What is the size of India in relation to the earth? In India, how big is Bhagalpur? In Bhagalpur, where is your village? In the village, where is your house? In the house, where is your room? At what point are you in the room? Now tell me, will you be represented by even a tiny point on the map of the solar system?

When you enter the galactic dimension, you will not be represented by even a speck. The endless, unfathomable universe is a flow of life. In this flow you become what you are, I become what I am. There is some ego in you, some in me. This ego is the identity and mark of mankind. This

weakness also causes man to live in a cocoon. Once the ego is dissolved, the earthen pot breaks and its water mingles with the river. Then jivatma and paramatma are no longer different entities. Shankaracharya says in *Viveka Chudamani*:

*Although a pitcher is made of clay,
Still it is no different to clay.
At all points, it is clay and clay alone.
Then why the false and imaginary name of pitcher?*

Will you also renounce your body?

It is my nature to renounce and not to attach. As long as I did my guru's work, it was in accordance with, and in complete surrender to, his wishes. When he told me, "You have the potential to propagate yoga," I did so. When he directed me to leave it, I left. I had no desire to propagate yoga, establish ashrams, be a guru or a disciple, receive dakshina or give diksha. I did my duty because it was guru's work and I was obliged to do it. I am a servant and I will do all that the master orders. If he orders me to fetch alcohol or mutton from the market, I will do so. I may not take it myself, but I will definitely fetch it for him. What choice does a servant have? Kabir Das has said:

*I have made my body a board game
And taken the die of love in hand.
The Guru directs the move
And Kabir plays accordingly.*

A servant has no choice. My guru asked me to propagate yoga, so I did it. I was neither born nor initiated into the tradition of yoga. My tradition is Vedanta. Yoga is the tradition of qualified yogis such as Gorakhnath, the people of the Nath tradition. My tradition is Adwaita Vedanta, but I have never propagated it. My guru told me to spread yoga, so I did. When I saw that I had done sufficient work in this field, I gave it up. People are still keeping the flag of yoga flying high because they are deriving benefits from it. Let

them keep it flying high, because people benefit from yoga in every way. Whether you practise yoga or teach yoga, you gain. Some people find a career or livelihood in yoga, others feel fit. Everyone gains from yoga.

My life, however, is my own. I came to Rikhia five years ago. I had to reprimand people severely for trying to scale the wall. It did not work, so I brought in Bholenath. Ever since he came, not only outsiders, but even those inside the ashram dare not come in here. Since Bholenath's arrival I have spent five years in privacy and peace. I sit for panchagni, then go to the mandap. Before his arrival it was very difficult. Even the swamis here would sit around me. I was not able to do my sadhana because it has to be done in secrecy. Only Parameshwara can rightfully witness your sadhana; it is not something for demonstration. Just as a man keeps his private life a secret, sadhana also has to be kept secret.

In earlier times, people used to keep even their mantra a closely guarded secret. Just as people wear imitation jewellery despite having precious gold and silver jewellery at home, the precious sadhana is hidden, and people only get to see what is not really the true sadhana. Priceless objects have to be hidden. Does anyone hide plastic and brass jewellery? Everyone hides gold jewellery. Sadhana is the priceless jewel of man. Whatever sadhana you may decide to do for an hour and a half – singing a bhajan, reading the scriptures, practising japa or meditation, it is not for display. Do not make sadhana into hypocrisy. Sadhana is simply for your own self. In a joint family, it is difficult to do personal sadhana, therefore, it is necessary for joint families to make a separate sadhana room. A *thakurbari*, a temple, is as important as a toilet.

Whenever I meditate, bad ideas and bad dreams come to my mind. Why does this happen?

Initially, when you concentrate you do not have positive dreams and thoughts, and often they become very negative. If you take a laxative or purgative, pure food will not come

out, only the dirty, smelly, foul stuff will come out. So, by doing practices of concentration such as japa, the mind becomes disturbed or even overwhelmed. These things are natural, you have to face them. Good dreams and bad dreams, good thoughts and bad thoughts, are just passing phenomena. You should not expect that because you do japa, your thoughts and dreams will always be positive. This is not possible. Initially only negative thoughts and dreams come to the mind.

Are there any practices for bhakti yoga? Can bhakti yoga be practised like kriya yoga ?

Bhakti yoga is not a practice. In bhakti you do not have to do anything. With kriya yoga you have to do the external practices. In bhakti there is just love for God. Even if you do not sing His name, it is all right; it is not necessary. Bhakti is true love, divine love, and for that there are no practices, neither asana, nor pranayama, nor mudras, nor bandhas, nothing. It is a feeling, an awareness, like passion, hatred, anger and attachment. What do you do? You feel it.

What if you don't have that passion of bhakti but would like to have it?

If you want to have bhakti, then go for satsang and read about the lives of saints. You can even practise hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya yoga and all the other yogas. To develop the attitude of devotion, it is necessary to practise something. But if you have the proper attitude towards bhakti, then you do not have to do anything. The life of a bhakta is an expression of love whether it is directed towards a transcendental being or to the people around him. Love does not belong to a limited company. Love is infinite. When I love you or when I love a number of people, my love is limited. That is not love; it is attachment, *raga*. But when you begin to love everyone as you would love your own kith and kin, your own folks, then that is another form of love.

For a bhakta, God is both transcendental and immanent. When He is transcendental, He is beyond the mind and senses, beyond name and form, beyond time, space and causality. But when He is immanent, He is in everything, in a tree, in you, in me. He is all-pervading, all-permeating, from core to core. Therefore, His love is not merely restricted to the transcendental aspect of divinity. His love is borderless, it has no fences, no limitations. He loves everyone. His compassion, mercy and affection flow for everyone. When your mind is submerged in this attitude, you do not behold yourself or anyone. You behold only the glory, the magnificence, the brilliance.

Does the relationship between guru and disciple go back to previous lives?

You should ask a guru this question. I am not a guru and I do not want to be one. I am a disciple and I accepted my guru as a guide for a certain period in my life. When I saw that I could stand on my own two feet, I let go of his finger and he let go of mine. To begin analyzing whether he was my guru in my past life and whether he will be my guru in my next life is unnecessary. My guru left his body in 1963. Now it is 1994. He must be thirty years old now. Will he come to be my guru at this stage?

At a certain point in your life, the guru enters as a guide. Just as a mother holds the child's hand and teaches him to walk, but lets go when the child takes off on his own, so my guru let go of my hand. I let go of his hand too. I stayed with him for twelve years, but then said bye-bye. Children who hang on to their parents forever become dependent and weak. Similarly, a disciple who hangs on to the guru becomes dependent and weak; he does not learn to solve his own problems.

If the disciple is sincere, he works hard to put his guru's teachings into practice and to earn spiritual benefits. This is my theory. I cannot answer for you. A lot of things on the spiritual path are purely personal, just like people's

emotional lives. If you believe that the relationship with the guru carries on through different lifetimes, you are free to have this opinion. I cannot negate it, but I do not believe it to be true. Nowhere does it say so in our shastras, Vedas, Upanishads or Puranas.

Can one receive diksha and establish the guru-disciple relationship from a distance?

Definitely. When your guru lives very far away and you do not know where he is, but still you have fallen in love with him, that is mentally projected devotion. This is possible and it has happened to many people. But let me tell you one thing: the only basis of a relationship between guru and disciple is *shraddha*, faith. Guru is the image, the reflection of the disciple's faith. If the faith of the disciple diminishes, he will see less of it reflecting from the guru. If the faith of the disciple is strong, the reflection from the guru will be very strong. The personality of the guru is the image of the faith of the disciple. Therefore, Mirabai has also said:

*Now I have fallen in love with the Guru's feet.
I want nothing but the shelter of his sacred feet.
The illusory world has now become a dream.
For me, the ocean of the world has dried up.
Now there is no anxiety to cross it.
The Lord of Mira is the clever Krishna,
And she is hopeful of the Guru's refuge alone.*

It has also been said in the *Ramacharitamanas* that none can cross the ocean of *samsara* without the help of the guru, even if he is Brahma or Lord Shiva. No one can challenge this fact. If my faith is unshakeable and my belief is deep and strong, my guru's personality will dazzle me. Tulsidas had great faith in his guru. He has said:

*Victory to you, Master Hanuman,
Be kind to me like my Gurudeva.*

Kabir Das has also said:

*Guru is greater than God,
Because those created by God
Sink in the ocean of samsara
Due to their worldly attachment,
While those trained by Guru
Are sure to cross over.*

In the West, we have a lot of problems with children. What can we do?

It is not only in the West, but everywhere in the world where modern education has reached. When children are exposed to strange thought processes, situations, philosophies and interactions, these problems come because they develop too quickly for their age. As a simple example, take a ten year old boy and girl. Biologically, the girl may be too young for sexual interaction, but already she has been exposed to so much that she wants it. Such exposure is abundant in our society, especially with the so-called information boom. Once, many years ago, when I was travelling in South America, I stayed with a family. The five year old boy was playing some video game. Suddenly he said to his mother, “I am frustrated.” A five year old boy experiencing frustration! Can you understand that? This is the situation even in Western rural areas.

In India, however, rural society is still untouched by this exposure. They have their traditional exposure which is: “Let mother be thy God, let father be thy God, let the teacher be thy God, let the guest be thy God.” This classical knowledge has been in their minds for many centuries, and has not been challenged as yet. Even if the children go to Deoghar, Patna or Delhi to work for some time, and bring that culture back with them, the society is so strong here that it will set them straight in a week’s time. The people here will tell them, “Oh, what are you trying to teach us!”

Therefore, the rural society in India has been able to absorb the influence of modern education, whereas the people living in towns and cities have not. Nowadays you have to take a different approach with your children. You cannot have the attitude of a rural society. You can't beat the child. Nobody, not even your father, mother, uncle or mother-in-law, can do that. If you say, "Sit down here," the child will just run away, commit suicide or do anything, because the minds of modern children are very unstable.

Their genetic transfer is not very systematic or even certain. Marriages today are not fixed properly; they are decided on the basis of love. I am not against this, because I live in modern society. I am not a social reformer, but I have thought about it. There is a genetic quality in each parent, and the child is their transfer. If I am debauched, it is due to the genetic transfer of my parents. Nowadays marriage has lost its scientific basis. The basis is sexual and emotional but not scientific. One body type has to match with the other body type. You should think about this in terms of modern science, not modern culture.

Modern society has lost this concept. In India, even today, when marriages are first considered, the horoscope of the girl is matched with that of the boy on the basis of thirty-six qualities. The qualities of the man and woman have to match. What is the map of your physiology, your personality, your life? The nose, eyes, ears, tongue, teeth, alimentary canal, rectum and so on make up the physical body. This body is not the *jiva*, the individual soul. If you consider the body to be the individual soul, there is nothing beyond that, no question and no answer. You have an individual soul within you. What is its graph?

There are certain qualities which may be biological, psychological, psychic, electromagnetic, and many more. We have never thought about it. I love you and you love me. There is no one like you in the world. There is no one more beautiful than you. This is the attitude today and it is based on obsession, attachment, foolishness, ignorance

and blindness. I am not underrating love affairs, they have their place in life, but love cannot be the ultimate factor for a scientific marriage. You can have a girl friend, but do not marry on the basis of this love. Marriage should take place only when the physical, mental and spiritual attributes match, because then the genetic transfer will be correct.

That is why children have gone completely out of control in modern society. Only three days back I received a telephone call. A boy of eleven, belonging to the family of a multimillionaire, ran away because his mother had scolded him. He was wrong and she had good reasons for scolding him, but he just left. He took six or seven hundred rupees from his private box and went to Nasirabad. There he purchased chocolates and books. The next day he phoned his mother and said, "I am here in Nasirabad." The parents had been worried about him for twenty-four hours. I said to them, "Don't worry about him. After all, he is the son of a multimillionaire. He will do the right thing when he is older and has children of his own."

In my time we had great respect for our parents. We did not question them. We led a simple life. I think the genetic transfer was better, so we never involved ourselves in disloyalty or disrespect. An atmosphere of mutual respect still existed, but now it does not. Our generation has passed. The main difference today is that children think they know more than their parents, that they are right and their parents are wrong. If children always think that they know more than their parents, how can you correct them? Dr Swami Vivekananda from Australia has a son named Prasad. One day, many years ago, when Prasad was a small boy of eight or nine, he said to his father, "Hello Brian, how are you?" I was taken aback and I asked him, "Prasad, is he your father or your friend?" "Both," he replied. So, if children were to have this attitude, then at least the parents would feel less offended.

Our children have changed due to cultural exposure, but we have not changed. We are offended when our children

Speak to us in their language. However, we should not be offended, because it is the culture of today. You may want to control the children, manage them and streamline their activities, but you don't have to. I can give you an example. Swami Satsangi, my secretary, sometimes speaks like a terror. I used to get offended because I was not used to that type of behaviour. She is very straightforward. I may not like that, but I have to accept it from a disciple. We were never taught that we had to correct ourselves. My drawback was that I was getting offended because I had not been exposed to that type of behaviour. I have been exposed to the 'yes' culture, but these people belong to the 'no' culture in which everything is outright.

You have to take stock of yourself. Parents need to change their attitude towards their children with the changing times and behave according to the new codes of conduct. Children today are not willing to accept you as God, nor are you God. If you were God, your grievances would be valid, but you are the devil itself. You lie and accept bribes, but ask your children not to do so. You have to deal very carefully with children now. Thrashing will no longer do. It is wrong to think of a child as your junior, because the child does not think like that. Ask your children some day, in private, with love in your heart, and they will open their hearts. You have silenced them with your slaps. In their minds they think, why do they ask us to do what they do not do themselves?

This attitude has also reached the villages, but the village children are still slightly submissive. Their society is still suppressed. Even though the children may not like the way their parents think, they still cannot raise their heads. In general, the culture of giving orders to children is either finished or moving very fast towards its end. A girl is returning from college in a rickshaw and a boy joins her. They save fifty percent of the fare. The parents begin to scold them, saying "Why did you sit in the same rickshaw as him/her?" The children are forced to obey the parents'

commands, so they remain quiet because they have no choice.

You have forgotten your childhood. Do you remember how many fantasies you had when you were six, seven or eight? Children have a lot of ambition and imagination. Have you seen how fast animated films are? Children understand it all, but we take time to grasp what is happening. Children understand every bit of Mickey Mouse because their brains are very sharp. The brain slows down with age. Watching these films with children, I was very surprised how easily the children could pick it up while I was always unclear. Later on, I understood that my vehicle had slowed down because it was a 1923 model and these were 1987 models. Surely they would be faster and better.

To manage a child well, you must not be too attached. Think that this is a guinea pig on which to experiment, not your dear child. I experimented on Swami Niranjana. I have never displayed much emotion for him. I do not even love Swami Niranjana, but people think that I love him. I do not know what love is; I do not understand it. Why should I love him? He was a guinea pig for my experiment. I taped the Gita and all the Upanishads, and I played them to him when he was asleep. The tape would rewind automatically and play throughout the night.

Swami Niranjana had a problem. He used to sleep so deeply that he could be physically transported from the ashram below to the one above along with his bed, and he would not wake up. His sleep was deep and unconscious, and there he found everything that I wanted to teach him. Swami Niranjana has never been to school. The first time he went to a school was to demonstrate asanas in Northern Ireland. However, if you speak to him on any topic, he will talk to you like a teacher, as if he has read about it. This is because his unconscious mind, which the shastras call *hiranyagarbha*, contains that seed. Modern psychology calls it the unconscious mind. Samkhya calls it *karana sharira*, the causal body. Whatever the name may be, it refers to that

power in man where the seed is sown. Many people have conducted experiments. I have done quite a few myself. I was bound by time or else I would have done more.

You must always think that your children are subjects for experiment, but be careful. Do not give negative instructions to children because they will do exactly and immediately what you ask them not to. If you say to your children, "This is bad, don't do it," they will straight away go and do it. If you sit with your child for half an hour every day and ask him not to smoke, he will begin to smoke earlier than he would otherwise have done. Always give positive suggestions to children; never give negative suggestions. Positive and negative suggestions have to be put very carefully because the mechanism of the mind is the same as that of a computer.

It was a different era when children listened to the wishes of their parents and touched their feet in respect. Now they take their father's name. There was a time when the guru's name could not be taken in public. Once a mahatma was asked his guru's name and he refused point blank to answer. Earlier generations had a different attitude to today's generation. That attitude was right for that day and age. Today's attitude is right for this day and age. Neither one is the truth, they are beliefs. You may have given birth to your children, but they are not yours. Never consider your children to be junior to you because, in fact, they are senior to you. The child is the father of the man.

Do you have any interest in sports?

I am a cricket lover. Cricket is a passion of mine which I have cherished all through life but never played. What precision it has! The ball leaves the bowler and is with the batsman in half a second. In this time he must decide what is best to do. What an amazing alertness of mind is required! While the mind of the batsman is concentrated, no one can oust him from the game. No sooner does the concentration slip, even slightly, than he is out. Cricket is a game of concentration. As

long as your concentration is unwavering, you will remain on the crease. If body and mind decide to withdraw cooperation to the slightest extent, the player is immediately out, lbw. So cricket is the game for yogis.

Do you have any suggestions for those of us over fifty?

When the vehicle becomes old, you should load it less. After fifty years, the vehicle does become old. It is not a 1988 model, so you should put less of a load on the digestive system, as well as the cardiac and nervous system. However, most people do just the opposite. They keep on increasing the load and the vehicle chokes. Either the filter of the carburettor gets blocked or the shock absorber gives way. Something or other breaks down. An old model should have boiled or raw vegetables and fruits.

As a rule you should fast once a week. Whatever the day may be, one day a week you can fast for Narayana, for God. Fasting is very good from the point of bhakti as well. Fasting must be done with discipline, not at your whim and fancy. Ekadashi comes twice a month, poornima and amavasya come once a month with regularity. Make it a point to fast for at least thirty to forty days a year. There are tremendous benefits; it gives a lot of *ananda*, bliss. The body becomes a little thin, but that is a bonus; a fat body is a liability.

Spend a tenth of your earnings on travel. Sometimes go to the sea, to the mountains, to temples, churches or mosques. Take time off from your business to go and listen to music. In India we have *melas*, fairs, where people go for a change. There is no such culture abroad.

Sixty kilometres from Barcelona there is a place called Montserrat, where there is a black statue of the Madonna, the mother Goddess. Go there and chant two lines from the Bible, or two slokas from the Gita, or two ayats from the Koran. God does not know Hindi, Urdu or English; God is completely illiterate. He only knows the language of the heart. Still, read the Gita or Koran. What difference does it make what you read? One day, while reading, your voice

will emerge from the heart, then He will understand that someone is knocking on the door for Him. If you want to call God, you must speak the language of the heart, not the language of the scriptures. I do not think God understands the language of the scriptures. Even I do not understand it.

God understands the language of the heart. Mothers also know the language of the heart of the child. The lover knows the language of the heart of the beloved. God knows the language of the heart of the devotee. What does it matter whether it is expressed in Sanskrit or English? God has no language. God is totally illiterate. He knows the language of the heart, but I don't know whether you know the language of the heart. Do they teach the language of the heart in the universities? You don't know, so you are illiterate. You don't know His language, nor does He know yours. Therefore, there is no communication between you and God.

Satsang 28

6 December 1994

*I*n the early 1940s, there were very good yoga centres in Latvia and Lithuania devoted to Swami Sivananda. I remember this because at that time I was in charge of the correspondence in my guru's ashram. But when Latvia and Lithuania were annexed by the USSR and became part of the communist empire, all the yogic activity stopped there. The people of these countries have a more psychic understanding than the other Europeans.

In European countries the new generation is more open. The children have a liberal way of thinking and their parents are unable to control them. Religion has no influence on them; they refuse to accept it. The authority of Christianity is gone and now the theory of sin is totally rejected. Everyone follows Freud, and whatever he said is taken as truth. The present society has been formed according to his views. However, still yoga has influenced these people a great deal.

The science of yoga, particularly kundalini, chakras and tantra, has had a very great impact on the young minds of the West. A lot of books on yoga have been published and many yoga associations have been formed. In Europe, yoga is well organized, it is like a mini-government. There are national yoga federations: the French Yoga Federation, the Italian Yoga Federation, the British Yoga Federation, the Swiss Yoga Federation, the German Yoga Federation and a few others. These federations all have their teachers, annual

meetings, resolutions, decisions and teacher training courses, and Bihar School of Yoga is their centre at the moment.

I helped to organize the international yoga movement. It did not develop so well in India. People accepted that yoga was beneficial and that it had been practised in the past by saints and sadhus, but that was all. Now they have given up this notion and say that yoga is very important in life. This much has been achieved, but yoga is not well organized here. Total knowledge and acceptance of yoga is still lacking in India. Maybe the coming generation will do something about it. Bihar Yoga Bharati, a yoga university, is now being established in Munger. It is the brain child of Swami Niranjan. Didn't I say earlier that the mind of the new generation moves quicker and faster?

What is your view of fundamentalist movements?

Certain sects are fighting a great deal throughout the world to maintain their orthodox form of religion, but ultimately they will have to surrender to modern influences. Any religious concept which considers that a woman can pollute a man or that a man can spoil a woman is wrong. The concept that a man should not live with or talk with any woman other than his own wife is not a very healthy one. The same applies to concepts of education, diet and God. You may be a Punjabi or a Hindu, but if you prefer to read the Koran, do it. Who is stopping you? If you want to read the Bible and pray to God, "Oh God, give us this day our daily bread," as they say to do in the Bible, do it. Freedom of religion is the only way. When it is said there should be only one religion, it means all religions are the same.

Why is it that most men are social creatures, yet some are able to escape this attraction?

Society, friendship and love are divinely bestowed upon man. "Oh, had I the wings of a dove, far away would I fly." People crave for society, friendship and love, but a real sannyasin wants to go away from them. When one has enough strength

to leave society, friendship and love, *raga* and *dwesha*, attraction and repulsion, then one comes closer to oneself. When one comes close to oneself, then one has to manage with one's own self. For an ordinary man, life becomes monotonous if he is steeped in himself. He needs society, friendship and love in order to break the monotony.

Do you sing kirtan here regularly?

In fact, this is the first time we have sung kirtan here, because usually there is nobody here to sing kirtan. I live alone. I sing, but singing on your own is not kirtan. Just now a group of people sang one line for five minutes. If you could sing this one line for three to four hours, you would go into samadhi! But when the dholak and cymbals make a lot of noise, I do not consider it to be kirtan. There has to be rhythm and melody and a proper symphony of music, so that gradually the tempo goes high and low, high and low, high and low, then you are one with God.

In Kali yuga, the present age, the simplest way to attain God is through *naam samkirtan*, singing God's name in a group. Most people are not capable of observing austerities; they belong to the culture of sofas and chairs. Therefore, one should participate in kirtan at home with a few others. It is not necessary to sing kirtan daily. Once a week go to a temple, gurudwara or church and sing. I used to arrange kirtans in churches as well. We sang in English and people enjoyed it. Music has become universal. People in the East and West are influenced by music and this generation is redirecting music towards God. The entire society, the entire psyche, is being influenced.

Music now has to be channelled towards God, and we are doing it by singing kirtan, bhajans, samkirtan and prayers. There are many forms of music. Music is part of nada yoga, the yoga of sound. *Nada* means 'flow of sound vibrations'. There is a particular sound which is imperceptible; it is there, but you cannot grasp or hear it externally. That sound is called *anahad nada*. It is a sound which is beyond sound.

Anahad nada is the basis of all sound. The sound exists in eternity, then it manifests in time, then in space. When it manifests in space, then it is heard. Kabir Das has also said:

*Remove the veil from your face,
Then only will your lover meet you.
The Master is omnipresent in every atom,
So never speak harsh words.
A light burns in the palace of your body,
But do not move from your asana.
Kabir says to the saints,
The anahad drum is being played upon.*

What will be the importance of bhakti in the next generation?

The generation of the twenty-first century will belong to the bhakti yoga culture, because mankind has developed its feelings and emotions to quite an extent during the present era. People's feelings are no longer suppressed or blocked, they are out. They may be a little perverted but they are expressed. These expressed feelings now have to be redirected and streamlined. The feelings that you have towards your enemy are *veera bhava*, towards a woman, *kama bhava*, towards wealth, *lobha bhava*, and towards God, *bhakti bhava*.

Bhakti bhava is not of a different stuff. The stuff of bhakti is the same as that of hatred. When you hate a person you are obsessed by thoughts of him twenty-four hours a day, while eating, sleeping, sitting and standing. You cannot rid your mind of the thought of him. Similarly, in bhakti bhava you should be immersed all the time in thinking about Him. However, although it is easily attainable, this does not usually happen.

Therefore, *veera bhava* is said to be more powerful than *bhakti bhava*. That is why Ravana resorted to it. He thought that the bhakti of Shabari, Hanuman or Sugriva was not possible for him, so the best way would be to adopt

veera bhava. He decided to create enmity with the Lord by abducting Sita, thinking that the Lord would, therefore, kill him and he would attain liberation. It was easy for Ravana to practise veera bhakti, but it is not so simple for everyone. It has been said in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

*Search for a relationship with the Lord,
Be it of desire, anger or fear;
Or of love, oneness or friendship.
If such a connection is made daily,
Absorption in the Lord is bound to occur.*

There are two very difficult types of bhakti in this world. One is *veera bhakti*, feelings towards an enemy, and the other is *madhurya bhakti*, feelings of a lover for the beloved, Radha-Sri Krishna bhava. It is the feeling which Mirabai had for Sri Krishna: "My husband is the one who adorns his head with peacock feathers." She had married for the sake of society, but she always considered the Lord as her husband. The same is the case with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Madhurya bhava is attainable by very few people only. Similarly, veera bhava is also rare and attained by very few, but dasya bhava is attainable by one and all. *Dasya bhava* means "He is my master and I am His servant." Let Him tell me what to do, I will do it. I am in His hands, I am under His command. It is the easiest of all and everyone can practise it. Tulsidas has said:

*I should not forget that glorious feeling,
That I am the servant and Rama is my master.*

If dasya bhava is not possible then there is another type of bhakti, called *aparadha bhakti*, feelings of guilt. Who could be more crooked than me? I have forgotten the Lord who brought me into this world. Is there a more depraved, evil and unprincipled person on this earth? I am the useless son of my Father. I cheat Him daily with ritual prayer and worship Him out of fear in case He makes me childless, a widow or widower. See how ungrateful I am. But whatever

I may be, I am Yours only. It has been said in the *Durga Saptashati*:

*A bad son may be born,
But a mother is never a bad mother.*

If you like this form of bhakti, then you may practise it. I am unfit for everything. I have heard saints and sadhus glorify Your name. In the Ramayana, *Bhagavad Gita*, Upanishads, Guru Granth Sahib, Koran and Bible, Your name has been glorified. But my mind clings to materialistic things like my son, my husband, wealth, prosperity, luxuries and sensual pleasure. I enjoy fighting, taking revenge and destroying the work of others. Tulsidas sings:

*Where should I go, leaving your feet?
Whose name purifies the degenerated in this world
And to whom are the distressed dearest?
Who is that God who has saved thee,
Mean-minded, obstinate, without esteem?
And who is that God who delivered from sin
The bird, deer, hunter, tree, inanimate stone?
All the gods, demons, munis, nagas, and human beings
Are helplessly overcome by the sway of Maya.
Why should Tulasi depend on them, O Lord,
Who are themselves under the control of others?*

I cannot concentrate on you. Whenever I sit to meditate, my body remains in one place while my mind roams around elsewhere. I wish to concentrate my mind, but it does not become one-pointed. It happens like that, doesn't it? In the Gita (6:34), Arjuna says to Sri Krishna: "O Krishna, the mind is restless, turbulent and obstinate. I deem it as difficult to control as the wind."

You should practise bhakti according to your own level. If you are in the third class and you wish to matriculate, you will definitely fail and continue failing year after year. So stay in the third class and practise the sadhana of that level. Every morning sit and surrender all your shortcomings to the

Almighty. If you cannot express them verbally, write them in your diary. Later you can destroy your diary so that nobody can misuse it! Tulsidas says the same in this poem:

*O Hari, how can I blame you for my shortcomings?
Please show the way which brings salvation,
Which is so difficult to obtain and follow.
Even in dream I know what is right and wrong,
But still I leave it and fall into pitch darkness.
Even then, like dogs, goats and asses,
I do not abandon the craving for sense enjoyments.
I have always done ill to the whole of creation,
And being enmeshed in the clutches of delusion,
I was never able to even think of my own welfare.
I live amongst my enemies, envy and pride of jnana.
By studying and hearing the Puranas and Vedas,
I know that Lord Rama pervades the whole universe,
But this sordid and sinful mind of mine is unaffected,
Like the hard bamboo of the Malaygiri jungle.
O ocean of compassion, I am an ocean of failings
And you know it well, O Omnipresent Lord.
Tulsidas has fallen prey to the world-illusion,
So he has come to your refuge, O enemy of maya.*

You have to lay yourself open to God. Do not be a hypocrite. You should know what you are. Your mind is so filthy, your ideas are so faulty, your imagination is so dirty, your speech is so rough. You talk about God, you read about Him, write about Him, think about Him, but how do you pray? During prayer, your body is all that is there; the mind has gone elsewhere. While doing japa, the mind is roaming all over the place like a delinquent. That is the quality of your personality; that is what you are. You belong to the lower level and yet now you want to gain admission to university! You will fail every year.

True bhakti means real love. When you love a beautiful woman, such as you might see in films, you forget everything. You forget your surroundings; you forget what

your parents would think. You do not even stop to think what would happen to the girl if she became pregnant. You forget everything in that situation, but can you forget in the same way when you are praying to God? Have you ever forgotten everything during prayer? If you cannot concentrate on God for even one minute, it means that you have to change the pattern of your sadhana. Surdas says:

*O Uddho, everything is a matter of liking.
Abandoning all the sweet-tasting fruits
Such as currants and date palms,
The poison-worm only likes to eat poison.
Even if you give camphor to the chakora,
He eats the blazing pieces of charcoal.
The black-bee which bores a hole in the hard wood
Is bound in the soft leaves of the lotus.
And the moth, thinking it is good for him,
Is burnt to death in the flame of the lamp.
Surdas says that each behaves according to his liking.*

We are all ungrateful. Why? God has given us everything; He has given us birth. We live in this world for many years, yet we do not know why we are alive. What did you do in order to attain this life? Forget your parents' contribution. What did you do? Nothing at all. You are alive, but what did you do for that? Everybody eats, so you eat. Everybody sleeps, so you sleep. They all roam around and earn money, so you do that too. But have you ever thought why you are alive? No. If you have ever prayed to God, you have only done so out of fear or due to some weakness. You have never done so because God is your only true friend or companion. You have never thought of Him in this way.

You have never understood your true father, your true prana or life breath which comes from Him only. Have you ever thought of Him with the same compassion and feeling as you have for your child, husband or wife? Has there ever been a case of heart attack over God? You often hear about heart attacks due to husband or wife, property or business,

but have you ever heard of anyone having a heart attack over God? "Oh God, I have not seen you or had your darshan for fifteen days!" No, you never suffer from heart failure as a result of craving for God. Heart attack comes where there is attachment, love, sorrow, desire or expectation. Who would have a heart attack if I died? The person who loves me. Have there been any cases of heart attacks over God? Have there been any incidents of bypass surgery because of God? No, never.

Whatever you have done has been for your enjoyment, for your sensual pleasure. I do not advocate that you should renounce all sensual pleasures. If you do not enjoy sensual pleasure, your life will be monotonous. Bhartrihari says:

*The enjoyable things are not enjoyed,
Rather we are enjoyed by them.
The austerities are not performed,
Rather we are burned to ashes by them.
The time is not passed by us,
Rather we pass away due to passing time.
Avarice is never exhausted and worn out,
Rather it exhausts us and we wear out instead.*

There has to be a balance in life. You have to have as much devotion to God as you have cravings for enjoyment. Enjoy this world as much as you can, but side by side give as much devotion to God as possible. This is one of the main subjects of the Vedic scriptures. It has been said in the *Ishavasya Upanishad*:

*All this, whatsoever moves in this universe,
Is indwelt by the Lord.
Therefore, through renunciation do thou enjoy
And do not covet anybody's wealth.*

You have been given fifty years for the enjoyment of sensual life. You have twenty-five years for learning and twenty-five years for householder life, then twenty-five years for retirement and twenty five years for sannyasa. Thus life is

calculated on a fifty-fifty basis, fifty percent *bhoga*, enjoyment, and fifty percent *tyaga*, renunciation. However, most people want one hundred percent *bhoga*, whereas I want one hundred percent *tyaga*. They are one extreme of life and I am the other, so there has to be a balance.

Have you called us here for any specific purpose? Is there some message we should take back to help change the world?

You have come for a few days. Just sit quietly and enjoy the talk, be entertained. I am not giving any sermons. I am a joker, I entertain people. The point which I am making is the necessity of leading the future generation onto the path of *bhakti*. The time for our generation is now over. If we were all to leave this world, it would not be any loss at all. Rather, it would sharply reduce the population from nine hundred million to four hundred million, which would be a profit. Sugar, which costs eighteen rupees per kilo would be available for eight rupees per kilo. Overpopulation creates complications within society and God or the government are blamed.

There is nothing you can do for the present generation, but you can try to inspire the future generation to take a new direction. Set your children on the path of *bhakti*. You do not have to tell them to get married and become householders because this is a natural drive. You do not have to tell your children to eat; they will eat because it is a natural drive. You have to teach them how to fast, how to devote more time to God, how to be spiritual, how to make some time in the morning and evening for *sadhana*.

The next century will be the century of *bhakti yoga*, not only for you, but for everyone, even for scientific researchers. Those scientists who have been working in the fields of biology, physiology, physics and so on will work on *bhakti*. What is the impact of *bhakti* on human behaviour? What is the impact of *bhakti* on the human body? What is the effect of *bhakti* on universal consciousness? Scientists

have been working within the dimension of matter, now they will work on human emotions, because emotions are more powerful than matter. By human emotions I mean feelings. Bhakti is a feeling, it is a deep feeling of the heart towards God. Just as you have a deep feeling of terror, passion, enmity or hatred, in the same way, there is a deep feeling of true love for God.

God has no form, but every form is His form because He is present in everything. He is the all-pervading reality; there is nowhere in this universe where God is not! In the Gita (10:20), Sri Krishna said to Arjuna: "O, conqueror of sleep, I am the Self, seated in the hearts of all beings; I am the beginning, the middle and end of all beings." So, you can choose any form, it is up to you. Some people worship Sri Krishna, some Rama, others worship Christ, Mohammed or Guru Maharaja. Everybody has his own choice. Tulsidas says in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

*All saw the form of Lord Rama
According to the feeling in their heart.*

To me every form is His, whether it be the form of Christ, Mohammed, Zoroaster, Guru, Sri Krishna, Rama, Devi or Durga. They are all His forms. It is absolutely wrong and unscientific to say that this is not His form. Think of the facilities which run on electricity. Whether it is a light bulb, a refrigerator, a fan or a heater, every form is a form of electrical energy. In the same way every form is a form of divine energy. It has been said in the *Kathopanishad* (2:9):

*Just as fire, having entered the world as one blaze,
Adopts the shapes of the different objects it burns,
Similarly the Atman of all living things, although one,
Assumes the form of the various objects He enters,
And yet He exists beyond also in the formless state.*

Whatever you see in this world belongs to God. This microphone is a form of electricity, sound energy. Light, cold, heat are all forms of electricity. If electricity alone has

ten forms, then God Almighty is bound to have millions. It has been said in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Seeing all the devotees restless with love,
Rama, who is most kind, played a trick.
At the same time He took innumerable forms
And met with them all, according to their status.
In a moment the Lord met with all his devotees,
But, O Uma, not one of them knew this secret.*

How many varieties of sweets can you make out of milk alone? How many dresses can you make with cotton thread? What is the ultimate form of cotton? Is a shirt or a bed sheet the ultimate form of cotton? No, it has no definitive form. Whatever is made out of it, that is its form. God is present in all forms. One can worship God in any form one likes. We were discussing kirtan earlier. In this Kali yuga, naam samkirtan, singing God's names is a divine path. The other path is helping others. If every single person were to light one candle for another person, how many candles would be lit in the process? With this chain reaction every house would be lit with a candle. Every religion says so.

What should we do in the face of dilemmas in life?

When you cannot decide a path for yourself, you should surrender completely to God. When you are indecisive, you should not depend on your mind. At such times you have to depend on a higher reality. It is my personal experience that when you pray and ask God to give you direction, He gives it. Of course, you have to be innocent. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (18:16), Sri Krishna said to Arjuna: "Renouncing all duties, take refuge in Me. I will liberate thee from all sins, grieve not."

When you are unable to decide the next step in a difficult situation, then merely depending on reason or on your mind is not sufficient. You can easily make an erroneous decision. It has been said in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Avidya can never take possession of the Lord's servant.
Impelled by the Lord, vidya takes the place of avidya.
The servant is never destroyed by ignorance and doubt
Along with knowledge, his devotion continues to develop.*

I have never had any problems in my life. If I have taken decisions, they were in compliance with His wishes. I have always followed His command, not my own. On a very few occasions, probably once or twice, I have asked myself, "What shall I do?", and His reply came promptly. The first command I received was long ago, when I was eighteen years old. The second command I received was prior to coming to Rikhia. One is not mature at the age of eighteen, but I had a pure mind and needed a decision. Though I longed to leave home, there were a number of obstacles which prevented me from doing so. It was not that I had any opposition from my parents, but I had my own problems. Despite that, the urge to leave home was still strong, so a tussle went on in my mind.

My family owned a large estate comprised of one thousand acres of agricultural land, fifteen hundred acres of forest land, five hundred sheep, many dogs, asses, mules and bulls, one hundred servants and many other things, which I had managed from the age of eight. I was quite occupied with this work and I enjoyed it. I was not interested in studying. I liked this work as it paid well and was a profitable business. It was not so easy to leave such a vast empire. My parents were not much interested in household affairs. They were the type of people who prefer to stay in the city with a job rather than live in a rural area looking after a property. But I had developed an interest in it and found it difficult to give up.

On the other hand, the urge to adopt sannyasa was equally strong and I felt like renouncing materialistic life. I was in two minds and both choices carried equal weight, so I left the decision to God. Then the order came: "Quit as soon as possible." It was the best thing for me. If I had not

adopted sannyasa and not renounced, I would have gone mad. A person who has strange, abstract ideas and who is not satisfied with his life will easily fall prey to insanity. I was not satisfied with my life. I wanted something more, about which I had no idea at that time. I wanted a transcendental experience, so I prayed. I left everything to Him and said, "Whatever you instruct me to do, I will do." He said, "Just leave as quickly as possible." So I went.

The same thing happened to me when I left Munger. In Munger I was a very busy man. Day and night I used to read, write and conduct all kinds of meetings. Then suddenly I became unemployed; I had nothing to do. It was a total vacuum. So I spent one year somehow going from this place to that, that place to this. I did a round of India, but ultimately I had to decide where to stay and what to do. There were two things that I could have done. Firstly, I could have devoted myself totally to spiritual life and, secondly, I could have taken up some other work because I had finished my karma with yoga.

I will tell you about my yoga work because that is a very interesting story. Quite frankly, I do not know much about yoga. I have written a lot of books on yoga and they were all published in my name, but I do not know much about yoga. It is neither my tradition, nor my parampara. However, I was given a special vidya by a tantric yogini from Nepal, whom I met when I was eighteen and she was thirty-six. That vidya enabled me to invoke any departed soul, so that he could live and work through me. One day I used it, and for twenty years the soul of a great learned saint was in me, doing all these things. The body, speech and mind belonged to Swami Satyananda, but the knowledge did not belong to me. Even now when I read my books I am sometimes startled. I think, "What is this?", because that was his work, not mine.

I received the knowledge from the tantric yogini when she was departing from my life. She taught me many fantastic things and I am very thankful to her. She was living in

Garhwal when she taught me this, and she died there a few years ago. So, in 1963, before coming to Munger, I invoked a higher soul in Trayambakeshwar, near Nasik. First I prayed, "O God, I want twenty years to establish a mission." Then I gave a *vachan*, a promise: "Once I accomplish it I will give up everything and come to you." Thirdly, I said, "I want to invoke a great saint to help me in my work." So, I invoked him and he came into me. That soul was with me for twenty years, but I did not know that he was here until he left me. He did leave me, but I had to go to Nasik to free him through invocation and then immersion in the Godavari River. When I was there I asked, "What am I to do next? I am quite capable of doing any work. I could start any movement even in the political system. I know everything that is happening in the world from day to day: province-wise, state-wise, world-wide, meetings, all the alliances, all the communities. Whatever is happening, I know about it." Then I left it up to Him. On 14th July I received the command from Him, "Just twenty-one thousand and six hundred mantra repetitions."

So, in the same way, when one is in a dilemma and does not know what to do, one should leave it to God, or go to a saint who has *divya drishti*, divine vision. Some saints are gifted with divine vision, but you will not find them on the streets. I was fortunate enough to come into contact with such great souls. They can foretell events, but they speak very little and stay away from society. They dissuaded me from coming closer to them because I would rob them of their earnings of many lives. They said, "You have come to enjoy the fruits that we have worked hard to earn, free of charge." You may look for such divine souls in big cities like Bombay, Delhi or Bangalore, but you will not find them.

Saints and great souls always renounce karma. They practise continuous, unbroken remembrance of God's name. This is one of their most important characteristics. They live far from karma and accomplishment, personal desires and their fulfilment. They run away from popularity, which, like a fire burns all the earnings of a tapasvi to ashes. It is very

difficult to trace such great souls because the holy and unholy live under the shade of the same tree. It is the job of a jeweller to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Only a jeweller can tell a diamond from glass. Without a jeweller you would throw diamonds into the water and collect glass in your bag.

It is not that this country is completely divested of saints and great souls. India is a very big nation. The trouble is that the new generation is running madly after the materialistic world. It is like a compulsion and people cannot do anything about it. Their condition is just like a buoy which bobs up and down at the mercy of the current; they have no choice. They cannot turn the tide of events because the whole society is going towards *artha* and *kama*, money and desire. People have forgotten *dharma* and *moksha*, duty and salvation.

Nowadays people look for saints and great souls in big cities like Delhi and Bombay and in established institutions. They do not make an earnest effort to search for a real saint. A thief struggles hard to locate a place and a prey. He goes out in the dark of night, taking a risk which may even cost him his life. Sincere seekers should at least be prepared to put that much effort into locating saints and great souls. Such people do exist, but it is difficult to track them down. They remain far away and do not want to be disturbed by society. I was told by such saints that if I approached I would deprive them of their earnings. When I assured them that I had come only for their darshan, I was told that even darshan would deplete their energy by half.

So if you are lucky enough to find such a divine soul, consider yourself to be blessed. What are the qualities of an evolved soul with divine vision? Study this aspect first. Sandal paste, tripundra, geru or matted hair are not definite indications. They may be sitting just as you are in a quiet place, satisfied with two rotis, remembering God and ready to leave if disturbed by others. Kabir Das has said:

*An avadhoota is equal to a hundred yogis,
Whose garland is his mind*

*And whose waistband is his body.
He smears himself with ashes of fear
And is ever under the care of Lord Rama,
Who looks after his total welfare.*

Always remember that in each and everyone there is a priceless gem. You may call him God, you may call him atma, paramatma or anything else. There is a very great prize within you, but it is so deep. Kabir Das says again:

*Those who dived deep into the water found Him,
Those who feared to dive waited and waited on the shore.*

The culmination of spiritual life is very difficult to attain. It takes sixty to sixty-five years to reach that stage. Although the full human lifespan is one hundred and twenty-five years, the majority of people only live for half that time. Therefore, out of sixty years, nearly fifty or even more are spent with the wife and children. Up to the age of twenty-five, boys and girls are unaware of spiritual life. When they get married, the wife does not allow the husband to follow the spiritual path, then the son does not allow the father to follow that path. By the time the man has developed a strong desire to renounce, his force is spent.

By the time real *vairagya*, dispassion, dawns, it is too late. Your habits are all wrong. You cannot live alone, you cannot think alone, you cannot move alone. You need money, you need your wife, you need your son, you need a secretary, you need a servant, you need comfort. If you want that priceless gem, it is not going to be an easy affair. In order to attain great things in life, you have to make sincere efforts in that direction. Great things are not easily achieved.

*This Atman cannot be attained by the weak.
Goddess Lakshmi goes to one who is a lion amongst men.*

It does not mean that, if you visit Balkeshwar Mahadeva temple and worship the deity, you will achieve your wish. That is a place of worship and you should go there, but what

you are looking for outside is within you. It has been said in the *Kathopanishad* (1:20):

*The Atman, subtler than the subtlest,
And greater than the greatest,
Dwells in the heart of every living being.
One who is desireless and free from anxiety
Realizes the glorious Atman
Through the purity of senses and mind
And becomes free from sorrow.*

I was told there is a yogini living on the nearby mountain who doesn't want to be disturbed. Is this story true? Is there any possibility of going there to meet her?

Yes, a yogini lives at the foot of Trikut hill and she meets people. If you are searching for something, you have to make an effort. You may or may not succeed. You will not necessarily get what you want; you may face disappointments. I can only tell you, but you have to make the effort to search for Him. I cannot help you, nor can anyone else. If you want to walk the path of God, you have to go alone. Nobody is going to take you on his shoulders and say, "Yes dear, I'll carry you half the way." This is a solitary path. You have to go alone. I cannot come with you. Kabir Das says:

*When I was there, the Guru was not,
When the Guru was there, I was not.
The path to God is very narrow,
No two people can walk it together.*

Previously you spoke about asking God to help you establish a mission which you promised to renounce after twenty years. Was this necessary to fulfil your dharma?

I had a very illumined guru and I was very close to him. I was a Sanskrit scholar and I speak Sanskrit even today like my mother tongue. I can speak it just like Hindi or English. My guru was a prolific writer and when he wrote books on

Ayurveda and other subjects, I would give him the proper Sanskrit derivatives. Then I would type his articles and translate them into Hindi. When he wrote about which yogasana cures what disease, I would ask, "What is the proof?" I knew my guru had been a medical doctor, but I still demanded proof. For years I continued relating to him in this way, so finally he said, "None of my disciples speaks like this, and I agree with you. You want to establish yoga as a science, so do it. Give yoga a scientific base, scientific credibility." That was all he said.

Later, when I left the ashram and went out into the cruel world, I came up against very tough competition: Swami Chinmayananda in Bombay, Swami Shaktibaba in Bangalore and many more. Nobody was prepared to listen to me! When I spoke, people would talk about them. I had a very difficult time from 1956 to 1963. I went to Bombay, Delhi, everywhere, but I experienced much distress, depression and disappointment. Sometimes people would call me and then not meet me at the railway station. I had to spend my own money; they would not even purchase the ticket. Frankly speaking, I had nothing. I was a very simple man, as I am today. I did not know the tricks of the trade, and even if I had known I would not have used them. What is the use of playing tricks in yoga? Tricks of the trade may be used in other businesses, but I never wanted to make yoga my business.

So I went to Trayambakeshwar, the place of my ishta devata, Mrityunjaya Mahadeva. I only said, "I have come here with great hope, promising my guru that I would do something to establish yoga and give it scientific credibility, but I don't think I can do it unless you help me. I only want to work for a few years; I can't work for longer. Once I am able to accomplish my task up to this particular point, I'll give it up and come back to you." I then invoked that spirit, after which I came to Munger, and the rest of the story is known to all. I consider that I succeeded. People do accept that yoga has a scientific base, not only in terms of therapy, but also in terms of mental and spiritual wellbeing.

The next phase will be when people say that bhakti yoga is necessary for the whole world, irrespective of caste, colour and religion; that it is necessary for children to know how to devote their time to divine service. There should be no fanaticism, no conversion from one religion to another, no socio-political creed. When you convert somebody from one religion to another, it is not religion; it is a socio-political creed, that is, for social and political purposes. You make more Muslims, more Christians and more wars. Conversion has no religious creed. I can read the Bible without becoming a Christian. If I say, "I am a Christian," what harm is there? If I take a cross in my hand and you take a mala in your hand, what harm is there? They are holy things. The cross is sacred, a mala is sacred, a yogadanda is sacred, bhasma is sacred, sandal is sacred, tulsi is sacred, and a Christmas tree is sacred in some areas.

Whatever is holy or divine, whatever has good vibrations, whatever can inject good thoughts and ideas into us, whether it be a good society, a good relationship with you, her or anyone, that is really the best form of bhakti. God has to become a living force in our society, and not merely confined to churches, pagodas or temples. As Kabir Das has very rightly said:

*A Hindu says that Rama is dear to him,
But a Muslim says that Rahaman is dear to him.
Both are destroyed by fighting with each other,
But none of them tries to guess the secret.*

God has to have two forms, the transcendental and the immanent. God is beyond everything, beyond time, space and matter, and God is present in all beings. We have to accept both concepts of God, not just the transcendental. God is transcendental, beyond name, form and boundary, but there is another form of God which is all-embracing, all-encompassing and which is immanent. He is immanent, present, prevalent and total. There is a sloka in the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* (6:11) which explains this:

*God, who is the only One,
Is hidden in all beings.
He is all-pervading
And the inner Self of all creatures.
He controls the actions of all
And all living beings dwell in Him.
He is the witness and pure consciousness,
Free from the three gunas of Nature.*

God exists in many forms, from the microbe to the towering tree, from the limited mind to the universal mind. God is in the person who needs your help; God is in the animal who needs your protection. I am talking about conservation. A complete idea of bhakti has to come out in such a way that society will be regenerated, then people will enjoy life. I have lived a very prosperous life. I have never been poor; I have no concept of poverty. I have practised self-imposed poverty, as they say in Christianity, but I do not know what real poverty is. I have only seen prosperity in my life, even today, but that does not mean that I should just give myself up to temptation. If I want a good and healthy life, then I must be able to maintain a certain standard of living.

When I came here in 1989, Mr Goenka, one of my patrons, visited. He saw me in a *langoti*, a loincloth. When he left, he said, "Swamiji's standard of life is very high; he has a six star standard." Why? I face heat and cold so that my body will be stronger. I do not consider that I am troubling my body; I am strengthening it. So what has prosperity to do with my life? If I am spiritual, if I can think of God, I can do something. I heard a voice which said, "I have loved you; give the same love to your neighbours. I have provided you with facilities; provide the same for your neighbours." It was clear! I knew it would happen. Of course, the definition of neighbour may change later; it may not be just Rikhia or Deoghar. Those who say, "This is mine and that is thine," belong to the lower category, but for people who are generous, openhearted and broadminded, the whole world

is one family, even though it may be split into many different countries.

What happens to the soul after death?

After death the soul goes and comes back; it is natural. For some people the body is the reality, but the soul is also a reality. The soul leaves the body when its time is over. It has been said in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:22): “Just as a man casts off his worn-out garments and puts on new ones, so the soul casts off worn-out bodies and enters into others which are new.” The soul occupies the body for a few years then goes away to take up residence in a permanent flat. It is a peculiar and very detailed science. I do not think that anybody will be able to give you a total idea about it. One thing that is true is that the soul travels even without a body. A poet has also said: “Life and death are nothing except change of dress.” Details about such things you can learn from the great saints, but no one can tell you precisely where and how the soul leaves the body.

The other point is that no one has a permanent role in this material world. We are all birds of flight. A devotee has also said:

*O friend, you are a bird of flight.
Who can have trust in you?
Your cage has nine windows
And all of them are open.
For you, in-going is difficult
But out-going is your natural habit.
Palaces were built for your residence,
Sons, wife and wealth were also acquired,
But in a moment you leave them all.
You are without attachment or any base.
I feed you many tasty dishes daily
And adorn you with beautiful ornaments.
I dress you in fine cloth and apply cosmetics too,
But still, no matter what I do you prove disloyal.*

*Even if I erect strong fortifications
And try to bind you in thousands of ways,
Brahmanand says, still you will leave by force.*

When you take birth from my womb, I accept you as my daughter. This body, this house, is mine, but the soul belongs to someone else. So, I accept you as my daughter, otherwise I would not have any relationship with you. Again the same devotee says:

*The fair of the world lasts only a few days.
All is a play of coming and going.
Some have gone and some are going,
Some go after binding their bundle,
Some are alone but ready to go.
You may earn wealth worth lakhs and crores*

*By means of sin, deceit, duplicity and fraud,
But not half a paise goes with you.
Sons, wife, mother, father and brothers are there,
But none can serve as helper at the last stage.
Why did you accumulate such a cartload of sin?
The whole world is transient and impermanent.*

*O my dear, sing the name of the Lord only,
Brahmanand declares, this will give you salvation.*

If there is any relationship in this world, it is only due to one reason. We are related to each other because of God. But try and look at this human and bodily relationship between us. You came as a traveller from somewhere, I came as a traveller from somewhere else and took birth in the same house. So, you accept me as your brother and I accept you as my sister, as both of us are born from the same womb of the same mother. It has been said in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

*Just as the mind mixes together
Clouds, grass, cotton and dust particles,
And separates them again at will,*

*So the creator composes and decomposes
The bodies of all the living beings.*

The fact remains that we are travellers from different places. It is due to chance that we happened to meet at one place or one house, otherwise it is just like meeting in a hotel in this world. The true relationship that one person has with another person is through God. All other relationships that you have in this material world are necessary in order to ensure that the beads from the rosary do not get scattered. Thus some relationship or other has to be established. A rosary or mala has a number of beads and there has to be proper coordination and harmony amongst them, otherwise they will get scattered. Therefore, a relationship has to be established such as: she is my mother, he is my father, he is my brother, she is my aunt, he is my uncle and so on.

These are merely social relationships, not true relationships. These are social concepts in order to have a better social system so that there will be no anarchy in society. They should be accepted as long as they are necessary, but ultimately no one belongs to anyone else. It is just a coincidence that we become united in a lifetime, remain together for fifty years, develop love or hatred for each other and then disappear from the scene. That relationship of sixty years is not going to last life after life. It is a myth. The poet Nazir has said:

*The garden of the world is enjoyed for some days.
You look upon this spectacle for some days only.
O traveller, make ready for the next journey,
You will remain here only for some days.
Where will you and I be after some days?
Our company can be shared only for some days.
Why do you tease this innocent heart?
O tyrants, this period is only for some days.
Poet Nazir advises you to remember the days of tombs.
The hope of life is only for some days.*

You have come with your karmas. Maybe you have come to clear the debt that I owed you in a previous birth. Now you have cleared the debts of your previous birth. Maybe in our previous birth we were enemies and could not see eye to eye, and in the present birth we are united as husband and wife. It happens. Sometimes you get linked as father and son, as brothers, or as brother and sister. It is not necessary that you loved each other in your previous birth.

The safest thing is to live in harmony with one another on this earth from a social angle. Keep on abiding by the social concepts and acknowledging them, but take it for granted that, from the spiritual aspect, nobody belongs to anybody. You are alone, you came alone and you will go alone from this world. Two persons will never go together. The same thing has been said by the great souls also and it is a fact. If you are not prepared to listen to this fact, that is a different matter altogether. You have to face this fact squarely. This alone is truth.

What should we do if our mind gets hurt as a result of worldly relationships?

If a person wants to be upset or unhappy, then he will keep on getting hurt time and again, but if you want to lead a happy life, then you will have to change the very definition of infidelity. Ultimately, infidelity is nothing but a mere concept, whether you call it a social, moral, philosophical or religious concept. I take certain behaviour as infidelity because I have understood it to be so, but if I change the total concept I will be happy and perhaps I will not be hurt mentally.

If I get hurt mentally I should be careful with my mind, because when I am hurt mentally, my mind is completely shattered. When my mind is destroyed, I become a victim of my own belief, my own concept. So, first of all, let me take care of myself. Once I can take care of myself, and can save my mind and my thought, then I can deal with the problem, but not before that. *Vishwas*, belief, was my philosophy, my

concept, the nucleus of my morality. It has been shattered and, therefore, I am unhappy. Now let me change my concept; there is no substance in it.

Once your mind is healthy, you can deal with infidelity. You have to deal with your infidel mind, but it is not that simple because a human being is a slave to his faith. You are a slave of your concepts, of your traditional beliefs. You have so many complexes, social, moral and philosophical, and you can't get out of them. However, there is a way of getting out, if you are brave enough. It is only a brave man who comes out of this wilderness of mental complications.

Does the soul evolve in each birth or does it have a fall sometimes?

Yes, the soul does evolve, though there is some sort of impediment for a little while. Evolution is the law of the soul. It may stop for a while in between, but it never suffers retardation. It may stop for a few days for some reason or other. It does not matter if it stops even for a lifetime or more, because one or two lifetimes is nothing in the infinite span of time. A hundred years is nothing. If you compare the lifetime of a *jivatma*, an individual soul, then thousands of years are nothing in comparison. It is said that every being passes through eighty-four lakh (8,400,000) *yonis*, or possible births in the course of evolution. So, even if you spend just half a year in each, it comes to forty-two lakh (4,200,000). In biology, there are more than eighty-four lakh species.

This is the theory of evolution, but we are talking about the evolution of man. The destiny of mankind is to acquire knowledge of the soul or spirit; the destiny of man is God. Where is man going? What is the destiny of man? What is the ultimate destination which nature has chalked out? God. This destination must be reached, if not now, then after millions of years. You cannot escape this reality. You cannot escape *sannyasa*, *tyaga*, *bhakti*; you cannot escape spiritual life. If you do not practise it in this life, you are only postponing it. If you do not practise it in the next life,

you are postponing it again, and you are postponing a good work. If you can become totally spiritual now, why not do so? It has been said in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

Dissatisfaction with wealth and sensory enjoyments

Is the root cause of the circle of birth and death.

Satisfaction with what one has is the cause of liberation.

Renunciation is the easiest thing. It is not difficult to renounce. I left everything and just lived with a loincloth. It is really more difficult to accumulate. You keep on adding penny by penny, and it is a very difficult task. While accumulating, you invite different types of diseases such as heart attacks, blood pressure, diabetes, but renunciation does not cause any of these problems. You may feel very hungry when you have nothing to eat. Even I sometimes used to get a headache when I had nothing to eat. I remember once when this happened a long time back.

In 1955 or 1956, I went to visit my friend who was a police inspector at Raigarh, in Madhya Pradesh. When I reached his place it was locked, as he was away. I was feeling very hungry as I had not eaten since the morning and I did not have a single paisa with me. I went to Raigarh and from there towards Lakshmipur, where a convent has now been built. I saw a small thatched hut beside the road in which a Belgian priest lived. I decided to talk to him. Priests are compassionate people. He gave me a seat and offered me tea and biscuits. He was smoking a cigar with a lovely aroma. I asked him if it was a Havana cigar. He nodded and asked me if I would like one. I said, "Yes", and he gave me one, which I smoked with relish. My headache disappeared.

We talked for a long time about the Christian religion, Catholicism, the Church, St Francis, St Theresa of Avila, St John of the Cross and St Thomas A'Kempis. He was very happy and said to me, "Why don't you go to Jaspur? We have a very good priest there who will help you." He gave me a letter for the priest and I lived in Jaspur comfortably for a long time. They tried desperately to entice me into

their fold. I would laugh to myself: is it possible for the fish to catch the fisherman? No. Is it possible for the pet cat to defraud its master who has defrauded the entire city of Delhi? No. I was too experienced in all walks of life to be taken in by them. I had seen many like them. Even though it was physically difficult for me to depart from there, I was happy to leave and go ahead with my life.

What is your message for the people of Jammu and Kashmir?

We belong to the cult of *ahimsa*, non-violence, not to *himsa*, violence. Ahimsa is a matter which needs perseverance and patience, as well as a bit of sacrifice. In violence, even sacrifice is futile, martyrdom is futile, everything is futile. Noble souls like Gandhiji in the recent period, as well as rishis and munis in the Vedas and Upanishads, have discussed this concept in detail. Ultimately, they came to the conclusion that ahimsa, non-violence and *satya*, truth, stay together. Non-violence is the weapon and truth is the accomplishment. If you live with ahimsa, satya will be victorious. This victory will not be the kind obtained by shooting a man down.

For the victory of truth, man has to go through many trials. Throughout history, India has had to go through these trials. Sanatana Dharma is a religion amenable to change. *Sanatana* means ‘perpetual’, ‘eternal’, ‘that which does not break’. There are religions which are unable to adjust to society and politics and, therefore, they perish. This leads to anarchy and a social vacuum until another religion takes control. Sanatana Dharma says that this should not happen. Change if you need to, but do not break the continuity of existence.

Until recently in Indian society, girls had to be clad in many layers; they had to stay indoors and keep their hair long. Now girls have chopped off their long hair; they wear short dresses and go outdoors, and nobody minds. This is so because Sanatana Dharma allows for change in the tradition

when necessary, as long as the change is in keeping with dharma. As long as you are mindful of *dharma* and *adharma*, right and wrong, you can change the tradition to suit your current requirement. This is Sanatana Dharma.

Over the past five thousand years, we have been changing the tradition according to the situation, the compulsion, the trends and disposition of the people. However, we always ensure that this change in dharma is not wrong. If you wear pants and tie, what does it matter? It is not wrong. If a girl sports short hair, what is the harm? If she puts one end of her sari on her head, what difference does it make? How is dharma violated here? These are traditions, but there is a distinct difference between dharma and tradition.

Every community, whether Punjabi, Gujarati or Parsi, has its own tradition. These traditions should change with the circumstances and times. The tradition may change with time, we may change with time, but Sanatana Dharma never changes. So, we did not change the title of dharma, although Buddhism, Jainism and many other 'isms' tried hard to make us do so. But no, Sanatana Dharma is perennial, we will not allow it to break. We would rather change our customs and traditions, as long as they do not go against dharma, but we will not change Sanatana Dharma.

Satsang 29

7 December 1994

Birth is not a certainty, but death definitely is. There is only one thing in life which is inevitable and that is death. Birth is not inevitable, it can be avoided, but death cannot be avoided. There is absolutely no way devised till now to avoid it. Many people have tried very hard to overcome death. For example, the Gorakhpantis or Kanphata yogis tried to become immortal, to attain mastery over death, by administering the chemical mercury to the body. This is called *rasa siddhi* or *para siddhi*. They also tried to attain immortality through the kriyas of hatha yoga. They felt that eighty or ninety years of life was too little to achieve anything substantial through sadhana, especially when forty to fifty years of life were spent in other pursuits. They decided that *para siddhi* was the answer, but it is not possible to practise these things now.

Similarly, many people have tried to become *amara* or immortal. In Egypt people preserved the dead body and put it inside vaults along with food and other articles, but it was in vain. Man has always sought immortality, but he has not found the way yet. Man can be *chiranjeeva*, or long-lived. Markandeya, Ashwathama and Hanuman are called *chiranjeeva* because they lived for hundreds of years, but they were not immortal. They had to give up their *deha*, their body. Man can be long-lived, but not immortal.

I personally feel that when your body becomes old it is better to leave it. Through rebirth you will go to another house, drink your mother's milk, play with toys, go to school and receive love and affection. In old age you get nothing. You cannot even enjoy eating your food. Therefore, when a person of advanced age dies, there should always be an atmosphere of happiness. People should not weep and mourn. Of course, an untimely death, say of a child or youth, causes grief. However, if a person of sixty-five or seventy years of age dies, there should be kirtan in the home, bells should be rung, the priests should be called, cows donated, charitable works performed and the conch blown, just as if it were a marriage. After all, the ceremony of death is like a marriage ceremony. As Kabir Das has said in one of his poems:

*The bridal dress has arrived for my departure.
People gather to accompany my bridal procession.
I am going to the house of my husband, my God.*

A sannyasin disciple who has served your mission for many years is now required to make an adjustment, because he cannot connect with you anymore. Can you give some advice?

No. I have given up all my responsibilities. I am no longer a guru. I do not have any *chelas* or disciples. Those people who linger around me do not understand the truth! If you have a husband or wife, you can live with him or her lifelong, but I cannot because I did not marry anyone. I just told people they should adopt a certain path. Now they take that path so seriously that unnecessary problems arise. They will have to solve their own problems. Why should they be so fanatical about guru? Many people are fanatical about religion. When they become disciples they are fanatical, when they become vegetarian they are fanatical. No! Keep yourself open.

If you need a guide, have one, but you should not stick to the guru as you stick to your spouse. This sticking business

is not good. Suppose I were not alive, what would be the relevance of this question? You should look after your own destiny and be a light unto yourself. The light does not come from outside, the light is within you. You search in vain for the light outside, because the light is within. The self is illumined, effulgent and brilliant. It has been said in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

*The soul of all living beings,
Especially the soul of man,
Is the guru of himself,
Because by direct experience and inference,
He is able to discern what is good for him.*

I had to guide people for a certain time because the soul, the spirit, which was within me, gave me no choice. I was not the same man who is sitting here and talking to you now. The spirit within me was different during that period. I was possessed for twenty years. I am not responsible for what he did because I did not even know then what was happening! I never wanted to be a guru. I never even believed in the tradition. In fact, I never knew anything about yoga! I have read very few books on yoga, but I have read books on Vedanta and other classical philosophies, the *Bhagavad Gita*, Upanishads and the *Brahma Sutras*. I had never taught anything before. The point is that I was possessed, therefore, I did things which I personally do not believe in.

I do not have any close and intimate disciples. Nobody should be offended when I say this. Swami Niranjana is my successor because he is capable, not because I have any love for him. What is this funny business called love? If sannyasins start loving, the whole world will go to hell. No. Live like a lotus leaf in water. A lotus is born in water and it lives in water, but it is always dry. Take a lotus leaf out of the water and you will see that it is still one hundred percent dry. That is exactly what the situation should be for a sannyasin who lives in the world.

Kabir Das has said:

*A sadhu is our soul
And we are his creatures.
One should live in the world
As ghee lives in milk.*

People have a habit of trying to boost their ego by associating with realized souls. They brag about their guru. “My guru is very good. The President and Prime Minister meet him. People come from foreign lands to meet him.” You are only boosting your ego by thinking in this way. A sannyasin is above all this. He is born in the worldly mire, he lives in it, yet remains aloof from it. Even if people fall in love with him and depend on him lifelong, like Laila looking at Majnu, he will remain untouched. I could never understand the desire for closeness and I avoided attachment all my life. Nobody is a close disciple of mine. Kabir Das has said:

*The householder serves the sadhu
And the sadhu remembers Rama.
There is no fraud in it,
For the purpose of both is served.
Always consider guru as Govinda
And remember God's name.
If you meet, then salutations,
Otherwise devote every moment to remembrance.*

When I went out on tour to do a program, I always took a disciple with me. People may have thought that particular disciple was very close to me. Tell me, can a servant ever be close to the master? It is the nature of the servant to be near the master. He goes wherever the master goes. Now, if people start thinking that the servant is very close to the master just because he stays near to the master, it is a fault in their judgement. What is this thing called ‘closeness’? A sannyasin has no heart at all. If he had, would he have left his mother, father and family? Try leaving your home and see how difficult it is! If someone can leave his home, it means he does not have

a heart at all. It reminds me about the story of the monkey and the crocodile. Perhaps you have heard that story?

Once upon a time there was a crocodile who lived in a pond. Occasionally he went to the water's edge where his friend, the monkey, lived in a jamun tree. The monkey would always throw him a few jamuns, which were very sweet. The crocodile would then take those jamuns to his wife. One day Mrs Crocodile asked, "Where did you get these sweet jamuns from?" The crocodile replied, "I got them from my friend, the monkey." She said, "If your friend eats these sweet fruits daily, his heart must be as sweet as the fruit. Why don't you bring him here so that I can eat his heart?"

The crocodile went to the water's edge and said to his friend, the monkey, "Come, I will give you a free ride. You can sit on my back." Halfway across the pond the crocodile said to the monkey, "You know, I'm taking you to my wife because she wants to eat your heart. She says it must be very sweet because you eat a lot of jamuns." The monkey said, "Oh, you should have told me this earlier because I have left my heart back on the tree." The crocodile said, "Okay, I will take you back so you can fetch your heart from the tree." So they went back and when they reached the water's edge, the monkey jumped up on the tree and said, "You fool! How can one live without his heart?"

Most people cannot live without a heart, but a sannyasin can and does. The normal human weakness is to try and establish close relationships with people, even when they are never really close. This is because of insecurity. Insecurity compels man to establish proximity with someone: husband, wife, guru, father, mother, brother, friend or some rich man. People say, "Oh, I know him/her very well; we are very close. We used to play together when we were children." Why do we need to prove that we are very close? This is human weakness and this weakness is universal. A sannyasin has to remain as far away from all these headtrips as he can. A sannyasin is nobody's friend. It has also been said in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

*If many stay together they may quarrel.
If two are together they must converse.
So it is better to always remain alone,
Like one bangle on the wrist of a young lady.*

Is bhakti karmically defined or can it be developed?

Bhakti does not need to be cultivated or defined. Bhakti is present in everyone. Bhakti is an all-pervading essence in all living beings, not only human beings.

*Love is not done, it happens.
This fire is not blown up in flames,
It blows itself up abruptly.*

Bhakti has to do with feeling. The feeling for God is bhakti. The feeling for one's enemy is revenge. The feeling for a girl is passion. The feeling for money is greed. They are all feelings. When your feeling goes towards God, it is called bhakti. The same feeling which emanates from a mother towards a child is affection, *sneha*. When it is directed towards a friend, it is friendship. Whether paternal, maternal or fraternal, they all are feelings.

You do not have to be told how to develop your feelings. You only have to be taught how to direct your feelings. It is only the channelling of feeling which is required. Bhakti is just natural; it is absolutely natural for everyone! All you have to do is just change the direction of the flow. The same feeling which was running towards jealousy, anger, greed and passion has to be redirected and then it becomes bhakti. Throughout history there have been many people who were wretched, passionate and debauched. But something happened in their lives and within a second, within the twinkling of an eye, they became great bhaktas. They did not have to develop that love because it was already in them. It was only misdirected or misguided. As Kabir Das has said:

*O my brother, no man can experience the pain,
Other than the one whom it hurts.*

*On the way a wounded man wanders,
 But there is no sign of a wound on his body.
 The satguru has shot an arrow of separation
 Which is tormenting the whole body.
 This arrow hit Dhanabhaka, Raidas,
 Namadeva and Mirabai.
 It also hit the kings of Balakh and Bukhars
 Who abandoned their kingdoms.
 Ramka, Banka and the barber Seva
 Were also hit by the same arrow.
 The servant Kabir says,
 Whoever was hit properly and endured it
 Became victorious in this life,
 Ever engaged in the service of the Lord.*

You must have heard the story of Saint Tulsidas. What was the intensity of his emotions? He was blinded by love for his wife. He crossed a river in the middle of the night, riding on a dead body, amidst heavy rain, just to see her at her parents' house. When he finally reached her, she spoke harsh words to him, which shocked him. Her harsh comments completely transformed his life and overnight his bhakti developed. This devotion already existed inside him, but it was being directed towards his wife. When she gave him this mighty push, the direction of his bhakti changed. She was just the medium. It has also been said in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Collect the threads of attachment
 To parents, wife, children, relatives,
 Body, wealth, property and family.
 Twist them together to make a rope
 And mentally tie it to my feet.*

Bhakti is a feeling. It has nothing to do with pooja or religious ceremonies. That is all ritual, physical actions, but that is not the definition of bhakti. The priests perform pooja in the temples, but is their heart, their feeling, their

bhavana in it? No. While the mother is sitting at home, the husband and children may be outside, but she is always aware of them. She has the feeling that, I am cooking for my children and husband; they will like it like this or like that. This remembrance is constantly at the back of her mind. This has to be your attitude towards God while performing all your worldly duties. A poet says:

*Love depends on fidelity, not rules.
Bowing the head is not prayer.*

Bhakti is like the feeling the mother has for her child, the feeling the lover has for the beloved, the feeling one enemy has for another. The same intensity of feeling is experienced in bhakti. Intensity of bhakti is called *para bhakti*, transcendental devotion. Para bhakti and *jnana*, true knowledge, are one and the same. Para bhakti means supreme devotion when there is intensity. It is not lukewarm love, it is so overpowering that nothing else exists in your mind. A devotee has said:

*Love is that secret truth
Which is understood
But cannot be explained.*

Does this kind of bhakti depend on karma or destiny?

It does not depend on destiny or on horoscopes. It does not depend on anyone but Him. If He wants to, He will give you that intense love. Bhakti can only be gained by the grace of God, not from the scriptures and not by any practice. No method exists to attain para bhakti. You may go on pilgrimages, visit temples, fast, have satsang with your guru and do pooja. This will awaken mild bhakti and you will begin to feel good, but it will not be para bhakti.

Para bhakti is not ordinary love; it is extremely intense bhakti. It is the divine love which Mirabai, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and many others realized. For twenty-four hours of the day, whether eating, drinking, sleeping or

awake, they were lost in this love. This state of para bhakti can be attained only through God's grace. There is no other way mentioned in our shashtras. There is a reference in the *Srimad Bhagavata* to the daughter of the King of Kaushal, Nagnajiti Satya. When Sri Krishna knew her vow and reached Ayodhya, she started thinking:

*How can He be pleased with me,
The dust of whose feet is put on their heads
By Lakshmi, Brahma, Shankara and the Lokapalas.
He who incarnates to fulfil His promises
I am not able to please by my deeds.
Surely He is pleased due to His own grace.*

All you can do to awaken bhakti is attend satsang, work hard, find a genuine guru to surrender to and serve. Be hospitable to people and do japa of God's name. In para bhakti, however, the bhakta merges totally and completely with God. He has no awareness of his own identity. He no longer thinks of himself as a bhakta. His mind is so immersed in God that he feels himself to be God. He becomes one with God. It has been said in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

*Even if the wealth of the three worlds is offered
To the devotee whose mind is totally fixed
On the lotus feet of the Lord,
Which even the gods cannot attain
In spite of long meditation and searching,
The mind of such a devotee cannot be diverted
Even for half the time taken in blinking the eyes.*

When the jnani says *Soham* (I am that), *Shivoham* (I am Shiva) or *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman), he feels that, he has that bhavana in him. That is why para bhakti and jnana are the same. In para bhakti the bhakta dissolves himself in God. Laila and Majnu were two lovers in Iran. Laila was a girl from a noble royal family. She loved Majnu to such an extent that she began to call herself Majnu, and Majnu began to call himself Laila. I am explaining the relationship between

a bhakta and God through a mundane example. Kabir Das has very aptly said:

*O Lord, by searching for you everywhere,
Kabir has completely lost himself.
The drop has merged in the ocean.
How can it be recovered?*

How can para bhakti be developed? When I am asked this I do not reply, because I do not know the answer. I don't think anybody knows the answer. It depends totally on God's grace. Just as the chatak bird keeps its beak constantly open, waiting for the raindrops of Swati nakshatra, a particular constellation of heavenly bodies, you must keep your heart forever open. Maybe the drops of God's grace will one day descend on you. Parvati also practised penance and waited millennia for Lord Shiva:

*I may try and try through crores of births,
But I will marry Lord Shiva
Or remain unmarried forever.*

Hanumanji also says:

*O Lord, the real adversity is when
Your name is unremembered or unsung.*

What is our relationship with extraterrestrials? Were the original yogis extraterrestrials?

I have read many books and had some experiences, but still I am unable to explain this phenomena. At Ganga Darshan, where the sadhana hall, Jyoti Mandir, is now, there used to be an ancient platform called Karnachaura. This was there long before I acquired the property. In 1956 and 1957, I used to come to Munger from time to time, and sometimes I would go there because it was a solitary place. I stayed at Ananda Bhavana on the banks of the Ganga, and in the daytime I would go to Karnachaura and just lie down. It was a very quiet place.

One day when I was relaxing on the platform, I heard a loud noise like a bomb explosion. I got up to see where the sound was coming from. It was coming from the direction where the Kutir is now. I saw a tall man in a white robe, with white beard and white flowing hair, emerging from a gap in the platform. His back was towards me and he descended a slope that was there at that time. I did not register much about it. Later in the evening, I went back and found that where I had heard the explosion there was a crack in the platform. It was a very big platform, about twenty by sixty metres. After that I returned to my residence, but the next morning when I came back, no crack was visible there at all.

That experience was extraterrestrial, although I experienced it with this consciousness, this level of awareness. I saw it, I remembered it, I could even imagine it. The man I saw was not a dream figure; he was like any other man. He was not a figment of my imagination. I was not dreaming; I was well aware because I heard a loud explosive sound. Actually, I got up from my relaxation, thinking, "What is this?" I saw the man emerge from the platform, but the next morning there was nothing visible, which means that the man with the white robe, the crack which was formed there and the explosion which I heard did not belong to this plane. They were extraterrestrial. I had this experience there and a few others as well. However, I have not given much thought to them because such experiences can become a hindrance in one's spiritual life.

The same question which has come to your mind has also come to my mind, but I thought, this universe is endless. It has no beginning and no end, either in time or in space. If there are terrestrial, extraterrestrial and celestial or divine universes, how many of them am I going to see within the span of sixty to eighty years? I would be just wasting time. It would be much better to invest my time in trying to find out the root, the first gene, the first cause of the universe. By knowing that, I would know everything. Of course, I have not found it yet, but when it happens then I will know all the extraterrestrial beings.

Otherwise I can never know about extraterrestrial life, because extraterrestrial substance is infinite. I cannot just point it out. Even if I go on talking to you for years and years, one thousand nights, two thousand nights, the story will never come to an end, because as far as I know this outer universe is only one level of manifestation. There are subtler universes than this, and there may even be a grosser universe than this. In the *Ramacharitamanas*, King Bhushundi talks about the many universes:

*O King of birds, listen to me:
In the belly of Rama I beheld
A cluster of multitudinous universes,
Filled with many strange lokas
Each more wonderful than the other.
Millions of Brahmas, Shivas and countless stars,
Suns and moons, innumerable lokapalas,
Gods of death and time immemorial,
Numberless mountains, oceans, rivers and lakes,
Endless forests, vast terrestrial planes
And many other varieties of creation.
I saw such marvels as I had never dreamed of,
How then can I possibly ever describe them?*

Who knows where it begins and where it ends? Which do you call the grossest and which the subtlest universe? There is neither the subtlest nor the grossest. To think about this is mind-boggling. After all, what you are talking about is your experience and what I am talking about is my experience. Is there any credibility to our experiences? Are our experiences true, or is it a massive dream that millions of us are having because our brains are shaped in such a way that our dreams are almost identical? That is what Shankaracharya has said in his Advaita philosophy. Can you prove that this experience you are having and the experience I am having is not a dream experience? Or it may be that somewhere a superbeing is dreaming what is happening now. We may be his dream characters.

When you dream, you may go to a mountain and take a photograph; you may meet a girl, go to a restaurant and eat spaghetti. Something is happening somewhere because you are creating mental vibrations, creating a stir in the universe somewhere. The universe may be internal, it may be subjective, who knows? What I am thinking is not necessarily subjective; it can also be objective. When I think, what exactly am I doing? Am I not creating ripples, electromagnetic waves, beta waves, alpha waves, theta waves or delta waves? I am producing certain waves, and what is happening to them? Are they just emerging and dying here or are they going out into the universe and connecting to something? These are some of the questions nobody has answered. If I claim that I can answer them, it would be dishonest. These are called unanswerable questions.

Do you know about Buddha? Lord Buddha lived in Bihar. He was a great thinker, philosopher, yogi and master, a man of self-restraint. He was very famous in Bihar. In fact, if there is a man of 'stuff' in Bihar, then Biharis accept him. Bihar is a very difficult province. Not everybody can survive there; only a man of 'stuff' can survive there. So, Buddha survived there. He came from Kapilvastu in the foothills of Nepal. He practised penance near Gaya. He was initiated by a Samkhya yoga guru and then he left the guru also. He made his own way and he got enlightenment.

People used to go to him and ask many questions. He used to say, "Well, brother, your question may be nice, but it is purposeless. It does not pertain to real knowledge and it does not help you to realize the higher reality. It is just logic or discussion. You are wasting your time and my time. You had better take sannyasa from me and go into seclusion, observe silence, eat only once a day, avoid company and practise these two sadhanas, vipassana and anapanasati." He only taught these two sadhanas. He would say, "Leave your room at ten o'clock and go for *bhiksha*, alms. Get a few chappatis and eat before midday, then wash your bowl. Do not keep any food for the evening: no breakfast, tea,

toast or sandwiches. Observe mouna; avoid company. Don't associate with people who are worldly-minded, not even with sannyasins who are worldly-minded. Don't associate with sadhus who pose as ascetics but talk about the world."

Sadhus, those who have renounced, have only one duty to perform – to search for the solution, and the solution is God. God knows everything because He created maya, this jugglery, this great cinema. We call it *tamasha*, a play. It is a strange phenomenon, the Lord who created me is within me and I am within Him. The *Ramacharitamanas* says:

*The one who has created this wonderful fun,
That Rama is in me and I am in that Rama.*

There is another book called *Yoga Vasishtha* which is the manual containing instructions by Sage Vasishtha to his disciple, Sri Rama. Rama was the son of the king of Ayodhya. He was an emperor, not just a king. Rama was sent to the gurukul where he learnt all the sciences for twelve years. He lived with his guru and his three other brothers. After twelve years, Rama returned to the kingdom. His father, King Dasharatha, had grown old by then and wanted to crown Rama and get rid of all his duties.

One day he found out that Rama was always in his room and not washing or eating regularly. Sometimes he would eat, sometimes not. The king was alarmed because Rama was his successor. He called Rama and asked, "My son, what is the matter? Why have you left your activities and entertainments?" Rama replied, "Why should I do all these things? This kingdom is meaningless; I am not interested in it. I want to search for the truth behind this reality. Who is the doer? Who has created the universe?" King Dasharatha became alarmed. He said, "Oh God, he is ruined. He is going to take sannyasa and then I will be in difficulties." So he called his guru, Vasishtha and said, "Rama is having some kind of vairagya syndrome. Have you got anything for him?"

Sage Vasishtha went to Rama and an important discussion took place. Sage Vasishtha explained to Rama about

dharmā, karma, life, after-life, samskāra, duty, natural obligation, divine obligation, social obligation and personal obligation. Rama questioned him and questioned him. Ultimately, Rama was convinced and he said, “I am prepared to follow your instructions. I will live in this world as an actor in a theatre. If you tell me to marry I will do so, considering the marriage to be an act in a play and myself the actor.”

Later, after Rama was married to Sita and he was sent into exile by his stepmother, he maintained the realization that whatever was happening was like a play in a theatre. He said, “If you send me into exile, I will go. What does it matter? If my wife is kidnapped in the play, I won’t worry.” If I say, “Oh my God, I am dying without you,” it is also an act. Everything we do is an act; emotion, passion, anger, worry, dispassion, everything is a *lila*, a cosmic game.

Sage Vasishtha said to Rama, “You are right, everything is a *lila*, but at least perform in the *lila*, at least act properly.” Rama replied, “Yes, my Lord, I will act, but don’t ask me to give my soul to it.” A husband in a play does not give his soul to the actress who plays his wife; an enemy does not really hate his opponent. He acts out love or hatred according to the role he is playing, but so far as his personal life is concerned, he is unaffected, untouched, totally detached. Similarly, Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita* (5:11): “The yogi, abandoning attachment, performs all actions with the body, mind, intellect and sense organs, for the purpose of self-purification only.”

Please tell us something about the attitude of sweetness and gentleness in bhakti called madhurya bhava.

The attitude of sweetness and gentleness in bhakti called *madhurya bhava* is the most difficult to develop. How will you adopt madhurya bhava? Will you wear a sari and dance before God? That is not everyone’s cup of tea. Madhurya bhava is very difficult for most people. The easiest bhava to adopt is the attitude of the worthless, idiot son, “I am of no use to anyone; I am a thief, a crook. I am a dishonest,

treacherous, fallen, lowly creature, yet I am yours.” This is the most appropriate bhava in the Kali yuga.

A slightly superior, higher grade of attitude is that of a servant of God, “O Lord, you are my master and I am your servant. Accept me as your servant.” You have to be willing to accept all the pain and troubles that He gives you as the will of your Master. A devotee has said:

*One should always remain by the door of a rich man,
One should not mind the beatings given by him.
If one stays always and does not leave the door,
The rich man is sure to favour him one day.*

You have to accept whatever pain and trouble the master gives without any complaints, because a servant has no choice. His discomfort and pain are of no consequence to his master. The servant cannot expect and hope that the problems of his wife and children will be redressed by his master. The master’s attitude is, “You are the servant. If you can work under these conditions, go ahead or else get out of here.”

Madhurya bhava will not work for most people. If you say that God is your mother-in-law, what intensity of bhava can you hope to achieve? A mother-in-law is not your real mother, just as your father-in-law is not your real father. You may say to God, “You are my mother, my father, my friend, my everything,” but your father and mother-in-law are not included in your ‘everything’. Your relationship with God has to be precise and definite. It should be one of extreme intensity, so that there is absorption into the form of God and an excess of affection. The madhurya bhava of Devaki and Kaushalya who had extreme affection was at this level. But this is very difficult to experience. There has to be absorption in the very bhavana, feelings and consciousness of the loved one. The mind has to be totally absorbed in the loved one.

The most honest and best bhava is that of the worthless son. God, I do your pooja, but my mind is not in it. I go to

the temple, but only out of fear so that I may not become a widower or a childless person. I worship Lakshmi so that I may have money to buy a motorbike or a bicycle. God, I worship you for my own sake, for my benefit. Otherwise I have no great love for you. If I can get what I want without going to you, I will not take the trouble to come to you. I am this type of fallen creature, but I am your son. You may give what you think I deserve. You may slap me, hit me with a stick, put me on your lap, grant me deliverance or, if you wish, you may throw me into the river Ganga. Surdas used to sing:

*O my Lord, bestow your bhakti on me.
 Even if you lure me with crores of enticements,
 I no longer have interest in other things.
 This is my nature from the very day I was born.
 I obstinately enjoyed the poisonous sense objects
 And I was not afraid of doing any mischief.
 I burned myself in flame, fell from the mountain
 And cut my head with my own hand.
 Seeing me perform my daring deeds,
 God also felt reticent and kept me away from Him.
 Feeling hunger, I have murdered many creatures.
 I abandoned my home like the cub of a lion
 And even gods like Indra are afraid of me.
 I have been thrown to different hells so many times
 That even the workers in hell are tired of me.
 I am so obstinate that I feel no shame,
 However hard I may be beaten or flogged.
 Now I have taken a vow to stay at your door.
 You must also remember to keep your promise.
 Being the treasure of kindness and compassion,
 If you do not show your mercy to me at this time,
 What can I do, even if I feel angry?
 Surdas says that he will not abandon your door,
 Even if you try to drag him out.*

This is the supreme bhava towards God. In this feeling, you do not express your ego in front of God. You do not

say, “God, I am a person of excellent conduct, I am your admirer and lover, I can do anything for you.” This ‘me, me, me’ business is not beneficial. The goat says, “Me, me, me” all the time and what happens? Its head is cut off. In bhakti you do not say ‘me, me, I, I’. Even madhurya bhava succeeds only when God showers His grace on the devotee. There are many examples of falling from this path. Many sadhus and mahatmas, especially in Braj, Mathura region, have done the sadhana of madhurya bhava and slipped. When they generate the bhava of a woman within them, it is natural for the sexual desire to crop up.

I do not include Mirabai and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in this category. There have been some people who have realized this bhava but, in general, madhurya bhava is for very few people. There are very limited seats available for admission to this stream. There is a high percentage of reservations here, too. In madhurya bhava, all the seats are reserved for the very innocent, the simple hearted, who are guileless and absolutely pure at heart. Mirabai belonged to a royal family but it never entered her mind that a statue of Sri Krishna could not be her husband. Tell me, if you were given a statue and told that it was your husband, would you accept it? No, but Mirabai had no doubts. The Maharani of Chittor accepted the statue as her husband. Only someone whose heart is as pure as that of a small child can do this.

When the doll of a little child breaks, the child cries. It feels pain and sadness. Do you feel that pain? You say to the child, “Don’t cry, I will get you another one.” You do not feel unhappy. The child feels sad because the doll is a reality for him or her. Therefore, only a person whose heart is like that of a child can adopt madhurya bhava. Only those people who have no guilt complex within them can have the heart of a child, and madhurya bhava is only for them. You cannot adopt this path, so please do not even ask questions about it.

Is fasting necessary for Ishwara bhakti?

Fasting is not directly necessary for Ishwara bhakti. However, the body which you have been given as an instrument for Ishwara bhakti needs to fast to remain in working order. Bhakti is done through the body. If the body is sick, it will produce gases, wind and belching. Therefore, fasting is necessary to keep all this in check. The idea that fasting will please God is not something that I believe in; however, bhaktas should fast.

For the past year I have been getting the urge to leave my home and renounce. It is possible that my frustrations are making me feel that way. What should I do?

If you want to leave your home and family, you should go to the right person for advice because I no longer give guidance on those matters. However, I have one thing to say in this regard. The man who truly wants to leave home does not ask anyone's permission, just as the man who wants to commit suicide does not ask anyone. The urge to commit suicide does not arise twice in the mind of man, similarly, the urge to renounce does not arise twice. It comes only once and it comes with such intensity that he cannot think of anything else. This feeling encompasses everything. Many people used to ask me, "Swamiji, shall I take sannyasa or not?" My answer was, "No, you should not do it." There were others who would come and say, "Swamiji, please accept me as your disciple." I would say, "Okay, come on the eleventh and have your head shaved."

Sannyasa and death are similar. The only difference is that in the actual death the body is destroyed, while in sannyasa the karmas accumulated by the soul over many lifetimes are destroyed. Actually, in sannyasa there are supposed to be no karmas remaining, no patterns remaining in the mind. But what happens is that many people come to sannyasa at a young age due to vairagya, without having fulfilled their obligations, without having paid their debts. They are nice people, but what do we do about their karmic

balance? We adjust it through *guru seva*, service to the guru, because it is necessary to fulfil the karmas, to undergo worldly happiness and sorrow. Without worldly sorrow man does not progress in life.

People think that happiness is the only truth, the only reality. However, happiness is but a shadow; sorrow is the reality of life. Do not forget that sorrow is real, just as I am real and not my shadow. The only truth in the world is sorrow. All religions say it. There is sorrow in birth, sorrow in old age, sorrow in marriage, sorrow in living, sorrow in dying, again and again. This ocean of the world is nothing but sorrow. He who does not accept sorrow as a reality is disappointed, but a man who searches for sorrow can never be disappointed.

He who dreams of ideal situations, who creates fixed ideas of happiness in life, will always be disappointed, whereas the man who says, "Nothing matters to me, except two rotis a day," will never be disappointed. Because he has asked for only two coarse rotis, he will get two loaves of fine bread and he will be happy. Instead of two loin cloths, he will get two silk dhotis and he will be happy. Instead of a hut, he will get a Ganga Darshan. That is more than enough for him, so he gives thanks. However, if he expects to get a Ganga Darshan in the first place and not a hut, he will be disappointed.

Therefore, everyone should develop a philosophy in life that sorrow is the only reality, and that those who go in search of sorrow attain happiness. Sorrow means whatever man does not want or like. In winter the cold is sorrow; in summer the heat is sorrow. Not getting food when you are hungry is sorrow; being criticized and abused is sorrow. Nobody wants these things, but this is what one gets in life. This is the truth. Look at your circumstances and your environment. Ask yourself whether or not this is true. Sorrow is constant. With it walks its shadow, happiness. Where there is sorrow, there is happiness. This does not imply that where there is happiness there is sorrow. Happiness lies in the wake

of sorrow. It walks slowly and quietly behind sorrow. The poet Vidyapati used to sing:

*O Bholenath,
When will you take away my sufferings?
I was born in suffering,
I spent my life in suffering,
I was never happy even in dream.
This world-ocean is unfathomable.
O Bhairava, come and catch hold of my hand.
Vidyapati says that Bholenath,
Who is his salvation, should come
And grant him the boon of fearlessness.*

That is why saints and mahatmas suggest that one should go on pilgrimages, sleep in dharmashalas, go to the ashrams and spend a month or so there. Live a simple life, forgetting status, wealth and intellect. Work like an ordinary man in the garden, in the kitchen. Sleep on a blanket on the floor. There should be some inconvenience, this inconvenience is the reality of life. Therefore, in every religion there is a discipline called self-imposed poverty, imposing poverty upon yourself. You may be able to afford six types of vegetables in one meal, three types of papad and good ghee, but you should decide to have khichari, porridge and rotis without ghee. This is also called *tyaga*, sacrifice, *tapas*, penance, *samyam*, self-restraint, *vrata*, resolution. It has many names and all these are for the benefit of householders.

Householders do not have complete licence to indulge in life. They have grabbed the licence by force and, therefore, they are suffering. A poet says:

*Those who preserved the dreams of success,
Enjoyed nothing but defeat.*

Householders think they have complete licence in grihastha life and there are no rules to adhere to. They can go to the cinema when they want to, drink and have non-vegetarian food when they want to. To justify this, they say, "I am a

householder, not a sannyasin. I can do what I want.” No. In household life you do not have complete licence to indulge. Every religion suggests that householders live a life of balance between *yoga* and *bhoga*, between yoga and indulgence. Of course, the pandits and purohits of our religion have not adhered to the higher standards. Things have gone wrong; their standards have fallen very low.

However, in relation to your question, the day the attitude of sannyasa develops in you, you will walk out of the life you are in, like Lord Dattatreya. His mother was Anusuiya Devi. She could not even put a loincloth on him because as soon as he was born, he said, “I am leaving.” I am talking of Anusuiya Devi who gave Sitaji some ornaments and discoursed to her on the dharma of a wife towards the husband:

*O Sita, the husband is an unlimited blessing.
That woman is mean who does not serve him.
Patience, dharma, friend and wife,
These four are tested in adversity only.*

Shankaracharya almost tricked his mother and compelled her to grant him permission to take sannyasa. You must know the story of how the crocodile caught him by the foot when he was bathing in the river. He pleaded with his mother to grant him permission to be a sannyasin or else he would die. His mother gave him permission and as soon as she did so, the crocodile left him.

Swami Niranjan came to Munger when he was four years old to take sannyasa. I gave him permission to stay. His aunt, his mother’s sister, came and took him back. She wanted Niranjan to live at home, wear trousers, shirt, tie, coat, and study the ABC from an English reader, like other children. She put good clothes on him. The next morning he had torn them all to shreds. When he was asked what had happened, he replied, “A mouse inside me has torn the clothes. The name of the mouse is sannyasa.” Swami Niranjan refused to eat. Eventually his aunt brought him back to me and said,

“Swamiji, he is the only child of his parents.” I said, “Then take him back. Who is stopping you? I’m not.” But Swami Niranjan refused to go with her.

So, the path of sannyasa is very beneficial. You can take full sannyasa, or karma sannyasa as a householder. Karma sannyasa means that all the rules of sannyasa apply to you but in the situation of a household, a family. You can hold a job or run a shop or a business. You can have a family, a spouse and children, but your inner life is that of a sannyasin. You can take jignasu sannyasa or you can take karma sannyasa. You do not need to ask me for poorna sannyasa. You do not need to ask anyone for this, because if someone says, “Yes,” it is wrong and if someone says, “No,” even that is wrong.

As bhakti bhava is natural in human beings, I would like to know if sakti bhava is also natural. If not, how is it cultivated? If transcendental devotion is the culmination of yoga, then can sakti bhava be called the base or foundation?

These are all words, whether you call it bhakti, sakti, asakti, virakti or anurakti. This transcendental quality is a special intensity of awareness in human beings. It is neutral in the absence of a particular form. It assumes a form, according to which way it is directed. For example, if you conduct electricity through a microphone it becomes sound; through a bulb it becomes light; through a refrigerator it becomes coolness; through a heater it becomes heat. In the same way, that particular awareness or feeling, whether you call it bhavana or chetana, whatever name you give it, whichever way you direct it, is known as bhakti, anurakti, virakti, asakti, etc.

Sakti bhava is a very complex subject, because it involves the three gunas: sattwa, rajas and tamas, which have been narrowly interpreted. It is generally considered that by sattwa we mean goodness, by rajas we mean a mixture, and by tamas we mean evil. However, these three terms: sattwa, rajas and tamas, belong to Samkhya philosophy. Samkhya has said that sattwa, rajas and tamas represent the three



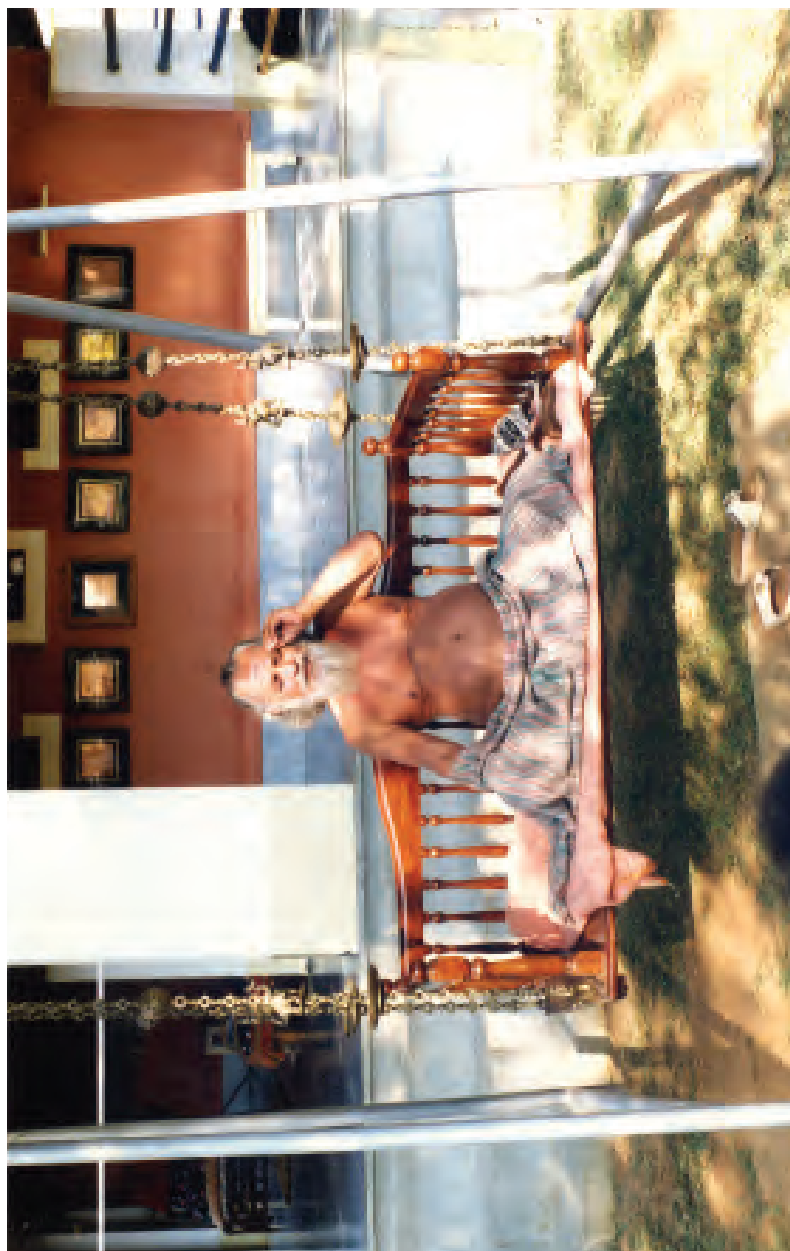
God knows the language of the heart



The mind has to be totally absorbed in the loved one



Faith is my wealth



Consider life as God's blessing



The bliss in music and in God's name mix very nicely



Always be happy!



Swami Niranjanananda at Ganga Darshan



Sri Bhole, Sri Swamiji's companion during Panchagni



Prasad parcels ready for distribution



Singing kirtan with villagers before distribution



Prasad parcels awaiting distribution in a village of prasad



Distribution of prasad



Villagers awaiting prasad



Donation of cows as prasad



*Administering oxygen to a TB patient at the
Sivananda Charitable Dispensary*



*Dr Neeraj Dixit from Delhi examining a patient at the
Sivananda Charitable Dispensary*

stages of prakriti: prakriti in inaction, prakriti in action, in motion, and prakriti in evolution. The word *guna* means 'qualification', 'quality', 'property', 'contents'. Prakriti means nothing except these three gunas. When these three gunas are combined, it is called *moola prakriti*.

Here *sattwa* means equilibrium, *rajas* means action, and *tamas* means inaction. The presentation of sattwa and tamas is the same. A man in samadhi and a man in deep sleep appear alike, although one is in the sattwic state and the other is in the tamasic state. Sattwa means 'inaction' and tamas means 'inaction'. When prakriti is inactive, either it is sattwic or it is tamasic. When prakriti is active, it is called srishti. There are three stages of activity: srishti, stithi and laya. *Srishti* means 'creation', *stithi* means 'existence', *laya* means 'dissolution'. Stithi is rajas, laya is tamas and srishti is sattwa.

When the three gunas become equal and balanced in nature, that is called *triguna samya*, then tamas operates. Tamas at the universal level means dissolution, withdrawal, destruction, annihilation, like Shiva. This only happens when the three gunas of prakriti are operating on an equal level. If rajas is operating more than sattwa and tamas, there will be activity. However, when sattwa, rajas and tamas are operating on a par with each other, there will be total dissolution. Therefore, when Shiva dances his triguna samya, then the destruction takes place.

When the three gunas combine, there is dissolution of creation. When rajas is dominant, creation takes place and the world moves ahead. In sattwa and tamas, there is no creation. This is depicted as Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha in our scriptures. To understand this subject, you should read books on Samkhya philosophy, *Shaivagama Tantra*, and also a book called *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*.

If every life has an aim and meaning, how can I find out my own aim and meaning in life?

There is an aim which you create for yourself, and there is also a destiny which is common for everyone. There is

a difference between aim and destiny. We make an aim for ourselves because of our limitations, desires or personality, but we do not make our destiny. My aim may be to have a rose garden so that I can grow beautiful flowers and sell them or make a nice bouquet and present it to somebody, but that is not my destiny; that is my aim. That is not the destiny of the rose flower which blooms in my garden. The destiny of the flower is something else.

What is the destiny of a flower? Either it should be offered to the king for his crown or it should wither away or be crushed underfoot. So, destiny means the ultimate process of nature concerning you and everyone. When we live in society as human beings, we have certain aims related with our social system, with our accomplishments, knowledge, friendships, parents, husband or wife. There is also an inner relationship between you and the happenings of your life; that is called destiny. If you become a lawyer, it is not your destiny; it was your aim and you achieved that.

Can sankalpa overcome karma?

If one has a very strong sankalpa, one can overcome karma for some time, but not indefinitely. However, the person who makes the sankalpa will have to make certain concessions, certain promises, because when you overcome a karma, you have to replace it with something else. Something must be substituted to fill up that gap. It is possible to do this.

Suppose I want to be a great scholar, a rich man or a person who has a lot of fun in life; these are all aims. An aim has a limit. For example, it ends when the person who wants to be a lawyer becomes a lawyer. That was his aim. After achieving this aim, he wants to be a lawyer in the High Court, then in the Supreme Court, and then he wants to be a judge. In this way, aims keep on changing. To be a lawyer is not one's destiny. Destiny is the intimate relationship of man with the events in life.

To change their destiny, to overcome karma, many people do *manauti* in the temples. They make a vow or

a promise; they do not merely ask, but also promise to give. When I made a sankalpa or a manauti, I asked for something, but I also promised to give something in return. What I gave was what I wanted. I wanted a dynamic, powerful centre to teach yoga throughout the world, and what I promised to give was the teaching of yoga. Your sankalpa should also give up the same thing that you want to gain from it.

It is of utmost importance that when you ask God for the fulfilment of a wish, whether for a son, wife or money, you also make a sankalpa, a resolve, a promise to God that you will return to Him as much as He gives you. This is necessary because, ultimately, karma cannot be replaced; it has to be undergone. This is the rule of karma, that whatever karma you incur has to be worked out. If you want to avoid a karma, you can do so for some time, but eventually you will have to endure it. Similarly, in one of the scriptures it has been said:

*Just as the calf searches for his mother
Amongst thousands of cows living together,
Likewise the actions performed in this world
Search for their doers in the next world too.*

Today I do not run Bihar School of Yoga, so I am in the same position as I was in 1956, before I set it up. Of course, I had more joy in life at that time. I thought then, but now I do not think; that is the difference. However, I had to undergo the karma; man cannot change his karma. Whether it is good or bad, karma has to be lived and worked out. There is no way to avoid it. Nobody can change it. Karmas are unalterable. Karmas are like seeds. When they fall from the tree, they sprout. But sankalpas have power and they can be created.

If a person wants his sankalpa to be very powerful, he should also make another one side by side. The other sankalpa must be equal in strength. “God, give me this and I will do that.” “God, give me a son and every Monday I will offer You a litre of milk.” “God, give me a son and I will offer him in Your service.” “God, give me wealth and I will give it

all to You.” “God construct a big house for me and this house will be for You.” God can provide anything. I am telling you this from my own experience, not from a book.

However, most people are so self-centred that they ask for a hundred thousand rupees and give only half a rupee back in interest. That is why God also makes fun of you. He says, “Okay, so you want to cheat me. Well, I am also a businessman!” It is impossible to cheat God because He is within you. When you think of cheating Him, He knows it because He is your inner intelligence. You may be making plans to cheat Him, but He knows everything. He is listening to you; He is within you. He is your own witness and knows your heart. He is the Almighty; the omniscient God resides in you. He is your protector and knows of all your misdeeds.

Therefore, whatever you wish God to give, you must vow to give something equal in return: “O God, give me wealth and I vow to return it to You in equal measure; I will not keep it.” Then it is certain that the sankalpa will bear fruit. The Almighty only wants His disciples to remain true to Him. Why does man want wealth? Because he is weak. Wealth and children are not important, but because of his weakness, man asks God for such things. So he should say, “God, give me a son and I will offer him for Your service.” If you give your son for God’s service, it means only one thing – that you follow God’s path and you try to take others along also on that path. In the *Ramacharitamanas*, Lord Shiva says to Parvati:

*O Parvati, that family line is blessed
Which gives birth to such a man
Who is worshipped by the whole world,
Who is pure, gentle and loyal to Lord Rama.*

In 1956, when I went to Gangotri, Satyavrat and Dharma-shakti, Swami Niranjan’s father and mother, accompanied me. We were taking a bath in the river Ganga when Satyavrat made a request, “Swamiji, please give something

to Dharmashakti.” I replied, “Yes, I will give something to you, but you must return it.” Dharmashakti agreed, saying, “Yes, I will return it.” We had the type of relationship where they always followed my instructions and carried them out. Swami Niranjan was born and Satyavrat returned him to me.

Now, tell me, was it a loss for Satyavrat? Yes, there was a loss – he did not get a daughter-in-law! However, in this world there is a flood of sons and daughters-in-law. It is very difficult these days to even feed them all, so the fewer sons and daughters-in-laws there are the better. Therefore, you should also take a vow, just as Satyavrat and Dharmashakti did!

All great saints and thinkers used to take vows. History shows us that great warriors also used to take vows. This practice exists not only in our religion; it is prevalent in all religions. It exists in the Vedic system, in Islam, Christianity and Buddhism. All world religions have this tradition. They call it taking a vow. But what is a vow? “God, give me this and next year I will not eat bread.” No, it is not that easy. If you ask God for a great favour and make a great offering also, you will never face a loss. If your transactions with God are honest and clear, you will never lose. If you do business with God correctly, you will never be a loser. You can take lessons from the lives of saints and hermits. It has been said in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

*It is true that the Lord bestows
That which is desired on those who long for it.
But that is not the real gift of the Lord,
Because even on receiving, the desires do not end.
Instead, to those who serve Him without motive,
Verily He bestows on them His lotus feet.*

I am worried because my son refuses to marry. How can I influence him to do the right thing?

During my various trips around India and abroad, I met many people. I found that there are devoted people outside

of India as well as within. In other countries there is no difference in the attitude towards girls and boys. If a girl is born, they feel as happy as they would with a boy because they do not have the system of dowry. They spend money on enjoyment and pleasure, not on weddings, funerals or births. They say that they do not want to get married until they can support and bring up a child. "Why get married? Instead we will visit India, China, Japan and have fun." This is their way of life. They have a lot of money and their way of thinking is different from ours. In India it is different. Although you may be poor, still you want your son to get married, even if it means he may die of hunger or your daughter-in-law may contract tuberculosis. Now, is this right or wrong? You may think it is right, but I think it is wrong.

What will be the path for the next generation?

In my time people were of a different nature. We hooked people by yoga, just like the hook with which we catch fish. Now the times are changing and people are getting hooked by devotion. The yoga of the next generation will be naam sankirtan, singing God's name, because people are crazy about music. You all listen to music whenever you get the opportunity. There is definitely no fun in living without music. Even death is no fun without music. The time of bhakti and naam sankirtan has come!

Can you see God or divinity in a criminal who has murdered another human being?

The acts of a criminal or a murderer are not under his control. There is a genetic transfer from parent to child and each genetic transfer lasts for seven generations. This is a biological fact. Whether a person is a murderer, a thief, an infidel or corrupt, it is not his karma alone – it is also the karma of his parents. Karma is a mixed bag. Firstly, there is the karma of the parents, which is the genetic transfer. Secondly, there is karma from the previous life, which is spiritual transfer, and thirdly, there is the karma of the

society, the environment in which you live, which is environmental transfer.

Thus genetic, spiritual and environmental factors are involved. These three transfers can compel a person to commit a crime. When things are not under his control, why should the criminal be blamed? Let us say I am under your control. If you give me a revolver and say, "Shoot that person!" what am I to do? I may not want to shoot him, but I will do it because I am under your control. What can that poor man do who is under the control of circumstances, the karma of his previous life and the biological factors which are transferred to him through his parents? A criminal has no choice or control.

In my opinion, if the criminal were properly treated by the society or the community, he could in fact grow into a great saint, because the basic qualities of a saint and a criminal are similar. However, the saint has a different environmental atmosphere surrounding him. He receives proper treatment from his parents and society, whereas the criminal is always mistreated. He is put in jail. That is the basic mistake because jails do not reform criminals, rather they make them into hardened criminals. Jails were created to contain criminals because the kings and rulers, administrators and governments had no other alternative.

Do you think if I committed a crime and you put me in jail, I would come out reformed? No, I would come out with greater vengeance towards society. There is no philosophy or system anywhere, either in the West or in the East, whereby criminals may be properly treated and reformed. They need biological treatment. It has been scientifically proven that genetic transfer is one of the major causes of crime. Until we are able to recognize the root causes of crime, how can there be any reformation?

Therefore, the divinity in a criminal has to be recognized and people with common sense and wisdom should neither hate the crime nor the criminal. Crime is man's long-standing weakness. When man was created, his first act

was a crime. He learnt dharma much later from saints and sages, but his first act was a crime. After this, someone, somewhere must have taught or guided him and he must have understood and started practising dharma.

The concept of genetic transfer is at the root of Indian culture. Previously all marital contracts were decided on this basis alone. Nowadays marriages do not take place in this way, they take place on the basis of love. However, love is not a biological factor, it is an emotional factor. It is not emotion or thought but the biological substance, the sperm and the ovum, which produces a child. If I am in love with someone, that is perfectly all right, but the progeny which we produce will be determined by the sperm and ovum, which is the basis of genetic transfer.

Therefore, finding a partner for marriage is a science. The coming together of a man and woman in sexual interaction has to be scientifically investigated, but nobody has the time, and love is blind. I have studied the system of marriage in Vedic dharma, the theories of gotra, pravara and guna. According to the astrological system, there are thirty-six qualities in a person and they have to match to some extent in both partners for positive genetic transfer. This is the astrological and also the psychological theory behind the traditional form of marriage.

This is the reason why India has produced fewer criminals and why fewer murders take place here than in any other country in the world. Unlike America, where they take a crane to the twenty-second storey and loot the building, in India only small thefts take place. No one will take a crane and steal a stereo, television set or anything like that.

What about war, when kshatriyas fight, is that fighting instinct also transferred in the genes?

I am also a kshatriya and I can definitely explain what is meant by kshatriya dharma. Yes, this quality is in the genes. A kshatriya does not mind killing or dying, but this is also due to the influence of the psychology of our dharma. The

dharma which controls the genes of a kshatriya is greater and more powerful than other types of dharma. Whether famous warriors like Maharana Pratap, Prviraj Chowhan, Rana Sanga or others of lesser renown, there has always been a dharma which controlled the kshatriya. That is why, although they defended their country, fought, killed and died, they always followed the path of *ahimsa*, non-violence. We believe in ahimsa, but that does not mean that ahimsa becomes the weapon of the weak. Ahimsa is the weapon of strong men who can fight and who can kill. A weak man without a weapon in his hand cannot speak of ahimsa. Have a bomb or missiles in your hand and then speak the language of ahimsa. Only then is it meaningful. The poet Dinkar has said:

*Forgiveness adorns the snake
Which possesses deadly poison,
Not the snake without fangs,
Which is gentle, simple and harmless.*

Fighting is necessary because wars are necessary. War is necessary for changing the economic and political polarities, for the transfer of power and the development of civilization. England was a great world power, but it lost its influence after the second world war. With a third world war, America may lose its power. This is how things change. War is an industry and makes millionaires overnight. War is not just fighting, it is an inevitable part of human society.

Is a mixed cultural marriage suitable for correct genetic transfer?

For a suitable marriage to take place, you must ensure that there has been no relationship between the families of the boy and the girl during the last seven generations. Intercultural marriage may or may not be suitable. Here compatibility of the genetic factor as well as the cultural factor should be considered. A girl from a different cultural background, say a South Indian girl coming to a

Punjabi home, will have difficulty adjusting to the cultural environment. Just as there is cultural maladjustment, there will also be genetic maladjustment. Marriage matching is a very difficult science in terms of genetic transfer. The prime purpose of marriage is not for two people to meet and fall in love with each other. That is the means, not the end. The end product is progeny.

What are the elements we must discard from the scenario of marriage? First of all, this affair of love. It does not work. You may love somebody, but do not base your marriage on that emotion alone. Love is your private affair. Just because you love a person does not mean that you should marry him or her. You must marry a person who is *agotra*, who does not belong to your community of genes. There are rules and regulations, family shastras, regarding dharma. People in India, in Gujarat, Orissa, Bengal, Bihar and South India still follow this tradition, although it is gradually withering away. Perhaps they do not all produce the perfect progeny but at least they do not produce criminals like Rasputin. India has instead produced people like Gandhi, Ishwarchand Vidyasagar, Lokamanya, Tilak, Ranade, Raja Rana Mohan Roy, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Aurobindo.

We need to know more about this subject, and now there are many good books available on it. In particular, there is a magazine published by Gurukul Kangri, Haridwar, a university which is about one hundred years old. The system of marriage is very important and one should not underrate it, because the quality of progeny depends on it. Every sinner, saint, rogue, dacoit, blind or handicapped person, whether high or low, is born of a mother. That birth is the result of the interaction between a man and a woman, and the fertilization of a small seed. When that seed is born, what type of mental program will accompany it? What type of heart and what type of organs is it bringing? This body is a complex technology and, therefore, this genetic transfer needs to be studied from a scientific basis. You may love a person, but that should not decide your marital status.

Does this science work out when people from different countries get married?

If there is a cultural and genetic match, it can work out and there is no harm in it. In countries like Australia, this has been the case. The British sent all their criminals to penal colonies in Australia, just as the Indian convicts were sent to the Andamans and the French convicts were sent to French Guyana. In Australia, these convicts made a nice country of their own and developed their own culture and system. Now their children sing kirtan and practise yoga. The mothers teach their children yoga and the husbands and wives discuss the philosophy of yoga.

Today, people all over the world feel a great need is emerging for a more uplifting philosophy and spiritual life. After the fall of the Soviet empire, many Eastern European countries became free and many of these people now crave spiritual life. What does it mean? Yoga is just the medium for breaking through. It means that in all cultures there are spiritual people with spiritual minds, who live spiritual lives with comparatively good habits, without too much drinking and unhealthy food.

Therefore, I do not see any harm in this type of marriage. For Indian people marriages have taken place as far away as Afghanistan and Iran. What about Vishwamitra and Mainaka? How was Shakuntala born? How was Bharata, after whom India is named, born? From the orthodox view, marriage outside of one's community was not sanctioned. In the Vedic tradition, unwed mothers were also not accepted and generally they had problems. Even Kunti had problems. Shakuntala was the daughter of an unwed mother and Bharata was the son of an unwed mother.

Shakuntala and Dushyanta were not married, and Bharata was born before the marriage took place. So, both Bharata and Shakuntala were illegitimate but still their genetic makeup was very great. Bharata did not give his kingdom to his children to rule; he passed it on to his assembly instead. He said the common people should rule

the kingdom. Bharata was a very strong boy. When Dushyanta first saw him in the ashram, he was playing with a tiger, just as I play with Bholenath. This has been described in the *Mahabharata*:

*This young boy only six years of age
Binds with string the tigers, lions and boars
To the trees near this ashram.
He rides on them and controls them,
Plays with them and runs with them.
So this boy will be the king of kings,
Although he was brought up in the ashram of Kanva.*

This shows that the genetic makeup of children produced by mixed marriage or even outside of marriage can definitely be good. Marrying outside your community or country is not a bad thing. It depends on the compatibility of cultural and genetic factors. Vedic science has elaborate systems for working this out and it should be calculated either on the basis of books or by a thorough scientific investigation. In India, there are at least eighty systems of marriage, each tribe having their own system and set of rules. These systems should be studied properly before attempting to understand and match the cultural and genetic factors outside of India.

Is Jyotish, Vedic astrology, a reliable science?

There are certain *jyotishis*, Vedic astrologers, who know this system of astrology, although they also make mistakes. The *jyotishi* may not be perfect, but astrology is a perfect science. Nowadays astrologers also have to support a family. While practising astrology, they must also do the job of a steno, a mechanic or an engineer, just to make ends meet, so they devote very little time to astrology. However, astrology is a total science and it requires great depth of understanding and experience to interpret it. My astrologer wrote in my horoscope that my destiny was to be a destitute loafer and a destroyer of the family. Every fact was correct; nothing was

wrong. I am still destitute, because I have never had a bank account, never signed a cheque and have never handled money. My guru changed the whole interpretation of my destiny when I took sannyasa. My karma did not change, but the interpretation changed.

There was one clear example in my life which verified this, although I was sceptical about it at first. I had a Punjabi friend in Sambalpur. He was a forest officer for Oriental Paper Mills and his son was working in Nairobi for the Birlas. He happened to go to Hoshiarpur where he showed his son's horoscope to an astrologer, who used to calculate horoscopes on the basis of the *Bhrigu Samhita*. The astrologer calculated the whole horoscope and predicted the death of the man's son. When I went to visit Brajrajnagar, he confidentially showed me the document and said, "Swamiji, this prediction calculated by the *Brighu Samhita* shows that my son will meet with a bad accident and die on this date, so I am worried." Although many precautions were taken, his son died on that date.

What does this mean? It means that destiny is first created in eternity, then it happens in time. The jyotishi is able to read the events in time through the *Bhrigu Samhita*. The *Bhrigu Samhita* was written long ago by Rishi Bhrigu, who created, permuted and combined different systems of calculating horoscopes, which are now available in Hoshiarpur. This is just one example of how astrology is a perfect science. However, astrologers are not always perfect at calculating or interpreting it, because they have a lot of diversions and are not able to give the astrological work the time that it requires.

I have another example. Swami Satsangi had an astrologer at the Centaur Hotel. She used to consult him every now and then, and his predictions always came true. For example, he would tell her that in three months she would have an operation and it would happen in that way. Once, suddenly he said to her, "You are changing your path and you will resign from your job." At that time there was

no such plan. I had told her to continue with her job, but one day she phoned and said, “I am resigning.” I asked, “What for?” and she replied, “I cannot do it any more.” So she resigned, and the astrologer was right. He was a simple astrologer who sat in the Centaur Hotel. However, when a man with knowledge gives his total energy to his *vidya*, he becomes perfect in it. Astrological science, at least in India, should not be underrated. There have been many great astrologers and mathematicians, such as Varah-mihir, who have contributed a lot to this discipline.

If that system of calculation was fed into a faultless computer, then would it be accurate?

Yes, but astrology is not merely a numerical system of calculation; it also involves interpretation, which is based on intuition. As I mentioned, by mathematical calculation I was destined to be a destitute loafer and a destroyer of family. The astrologer could not intuitively predict that I would become a sannyasin, because sannyasa is not predictable by astrology. It can only be seen that some change in life is taking place or that the path in one’s life will change. It cannot show that you will shave your head, change your name, leave your *gotra*, family line, and perform *tarpan*, oblation, to your parents. At the time of sannyasa, I offered all the necessary *shraaddha*, rites of purification, to my father, mother, grandmother and great grandmother. So I have no more obligations to them. Astrology cannot predict the taking of sannyasa; the astrologer must have an intuitive understanding of the science as well.

When astrologers talk about an upaya or solution, an action to prevent a tragedy from happening, how valid is that?

Sometimes but not always. When bad elements are predicted in astrology, there has to be some solution for them. So, in the science of astrology there are solutions, or *upaya*, as you mentioned. There are also deterrent

principles, which may not necessarily change the course of events, but certainly they change the ability of your mind to tackle the situation. If your mind is fifty percent improved, most of the things that arise in your life will not seem so bad. You may perceive a calamity with panic or with balance and detachment. When you face a calamity with detachment, you will not be affected by it. However, when you perceive the same calamity with fear, then you are overwhelmed by it, you cannot face it. When you maintain balance, you can clearly see what the calamity is and what can be done to restore the harmony. So, in this sense, there are upayas or solutions to the problems.

Satsang 30

8 December 1994

People say that I used to teach yoga, but I have never taken a yogasana class in my life. I used to give lectures and sing kirtan. I am a person who looks to the future and forgets about the past. This century has been one of technology. The next century will be one of bhakti and naam samkirtan. This will be necessary because we are going to face a great problem – how to save mankind. When you have to save mankind, you have to choose a path. In the same way, whenever there is increase in political injustice, atrocities or anarchy, then there is a rise in bhakti and dharma in society. Sri Krishna declares in the Gita (4:7): “Whenever there is decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness, O Arjuna, I manifest Myself.”

In the past I thought that if people wanted to learn yoga, then it should be taught to them, but now I say, teach naam samkirtan to young and old. Here in Rikhia it is very quiet. I used to sing bhajans alone. Since we started singing kirtan, this place has become sacred. The whole atmosphere is purified. Now there is peace, happiness and well-being in the villages and houses where naam samkirtan and satsang are done. Samkirtan, the singing of God’s name, is the means of purification. This will be the yoga of the twenty-first century. People all over the world, irrespective of their nationality, culture, colour and creed, will enjoy singing God’s name on a family or community basis, in their

hundreds and thousands. The Lord's name is the redeemer of all physical, mental and social illness. In the *Srimad Bhagavata* it has been said:

*If praise of the Lord, singing His name,
And hearing of his noble and good qualities
Is done regularly by the practitioner,
They take root in the heart and destroy affliction,
In the same way that the sun destroys darkness
And the wind disperses the clouds.*

In this century we have suffered because of the emphasis on bhoga, materialism, pleasure, enjoyment. This century did not support bhakti; it supported politics, materialism and the fulfilment of petty desires. You want to own a bicycle, a motorcycle or a car; that is all you have been thinking about. International peace can only be achieved if every human being and every family is peaceful. If everybody lights one candle, all the candles will be kindled. In the *Srimad Bhagavata* it has been said:

*Just as fire burns wood to ashes,
The sanctifying name of the Lord,
Sung knowingly or unknowingly,
Burns away all the sins of mankind.
Just as divine nectar makes man immortal,
Even if taken without one's knowledge,
Similarly the name of the Lord,
Even if spoken without awareness,
Will undoubtedly bear fruit.*

In the twenty-first century bhakti will be supported by society and by the scientists. The same scientists who have been experimenting on matter, physics, nuclear physics and other sciences will conduct experiments on bhakti and kirtan. Your children will sing even against your wishes, because the times are changing. The winter of materialism is going and the spring of bhakti is coming. When the winter goes and summer comes, you take off your sweaters.

When the summer goes and winter comes, you put on your sweaters. Similarly, the season of materialism is going. People are really tired, frustrated and disappointed with this culture.

The whole of life today is based on materialism. Wouldn't you prefer a simple life with peace of mind? What kind of life do people experience in the cities? They experience slum life. What facilities do they have there? They live in one room in front of which is an open drain. Living in the villages in houses made of mud is far cleaner and better than living in the city slums. Here, in Rikhia, we have peace and quiet. There is no noise pollution, air pollution or social pollution.

What has this present civilization given to you? It has given you filth, crowds and mistrust. It has given you broken families, anxiety, confusion and irritation. You are experiencing distress just as your children do when they have to sit for their first examination. You experience worry in applying for an interview; you even worry while playing sports. It seems that anxiety has become your culture and later, when this anxiety increases, it turns into anxiety neurosis.

Now, only God's name, bhajan and kirtan are left for the next century, because no one can perform yajna, not even saints and sages. Saints and sages of this era also belong to society; they have not come from heaven. You must understand that the saints and sages of today cannot do penance as they did in the times of old. After just one day of fasting, they start complaining of gastric acidity! If their head aches even a little, they call for the doctor. The qualities of asceticism are not present. In this age, renunciation, penance, fasting and yoga are not suitable paths to reach God; only faith in God and remembering His name can help you. If you lack faith and belief, you cannot approach God. In the *Ramacharitamanas*, Tulsidas has also said:

*In Kali yuga there is no need of yoga,
Yajna, japa, austerity, fasting or worship.
The only dependable means is faith
And remembrance of the name of Lord Rama.*

These days, if you are planning to make some great offering or do penance, it is not possible. Even if you think of taking sannyasa after attaining old age, you cannot. These days people are sick and weak. You think you will take sannyasa after the age of sixty and stay in an ashram, but it is not possible for you to do this. You come to stay in the ashram for a month and then run away after just four days because you have to eat dry rotis instead of nice home-cooked, hot meals.

We are considering setting up a foundation to investigate and codify kundalini. Could you give us any suggestions that may help us in our endeavour?

When I was six years old, I suddenly had an experience which was strange and frightening. I could see my body, but I was not able to feel it, as I feel it now. I experienced disembodiment, and this happened to me three times. My family consulted sadhus, mahatmas and saints as well as doctors. Fortunately, in those days we did not have mental hospitals in India, so I was saved. If there had been mental hospitals, my family probably would have had me admitted.

The symptoms of a schizophrenic and those of a person whose primal energy is about to arise are more or less the same. The external symptoms in the sattwic state of mind and in the tamasic state of mind are identical. A yogi in nirvikalpa samadhi and a drunken man in deep sleep look identical and their symptoms are also alike. Similarly, a person who is schizophrenic, who may be considered abnormal or a lunatic, has identical symptoms to a person whose primal power is awakening. However, there is a difference when the brain waves are measured. In the first condition the waves are distorted, disconnected and do not form a particular pattern, whereas in the case of a person

who is experiencing extrasensorial experiences, the brain wave patterns are regular.

At present, many people are involved in kundalini research, but it is not being done properly because it requires special background knowledge. The researchers should have an understanding of what the brainwave patterns are at the time of awakening, whether alpha, beta, delta or theta. Likewise, they should also understand the brainwave pattern in a schizophrenic and be able to clearly differentiate between the two. This type of research requires not only team work but a sophisticated approach. Someone who has a thorough knowledge of kundalini is required to guide such projects.

There are scriptures from ancient times written about kundalini yoga which were originally in Sanskrit. You can also read about the experiences of Christian saints like St John of the Cross, St Teresa of Avila and many others who have had kundalini experiences. Some of these experiences are also documented in the Bible. The indications are there: the experience of another space, another dimension, another state of mind.

Awakening of kundalini relates to a change in the state of mind or an altered state of mind. Just as sleep, dream and fantasy are different states of mind, likewise kundalini awakening and lunacy are different states of mind. In each state there is some alteration in the brainwave pattern. In sleep, delta waves are observed; when dozing, alpha waves are active, and if one is thinking very fast, beta waves are predominant. So, these things have to be studied from a very scientific point of view.

When I came here last time you asked me to take my grandson who is handicapped to Pashupatinath and stay there with him for some time. We went and stayed in the mandir for three days but he was not helped.

When Pashupatinath has failed, then how can Satyananda succeed? I am not the Almighty above. I am not even almighty. I am not Him. I am a man. I have taken birth from

my mother's womb. I have done good and bad deeds. You must understand this. It is not what you presume. Instead of asking for my help, pray to the Almighty. I can only wish him well.

Please explain the difference between savikalpa samadhi and nirvikalpa samadhi.

Leave such questions and sit down. Here we are talking about sweets, rasagullas and chamcham, and you have asked me about a very bitter subject which is like the decoction of neem. As one poet has said:

*Drink, drink and drink deeply
From the cup that is full
Of the Name of the Lord.
By drinking and encouraging others,
Become totally intoxicated.*

The subject of savikalpa and nirvikalpa samadhi is like the decoction of neem, whereas God's name has the sweetest taste. You may ask about it but I no longer speak of such things. I left nirvikalpa samadhi behind in Munger. If I speak of nirvikalpa samadhi and savikalpa samadhi, everyone will doze off because many people here have not even heard these terms.

However, everyone knows about devotion and love for God because we all love someone. You do not have to understand love intellectually. You love your mother, brother, young ones and friends. As boys and girls grow up, they love one another, husbands and wives love one another, so they understand love. But no one understands nirvikalpa samadhi, savikalpa samadhi, the basic nature, Vedanta, and so on. Only saints and sages can speak about these topics. I come from the line of Shankaracharya, but Vedanta is not a subject for this day and age. When the sages spoke about it in ancient times, they were that type of people. They had time to repeat, "Aham Brahma," or "Ayam Atmabrahma," but that era has passed.

In this age, if man wants to be liberated from the path of suffering, he has to think about an alternative means. There is pleasure in bhoga, but it is also possible to find an alternative method of achieving pleasure. Still we do not leave bhoga. Singing bhajans is an alternative to bhoga. You experience immense pleasure through singing bhajans. If you establish a relationship with God and secure that relationship with Him, be it love, submission or devotion, that gives pleasure. If you can experience pleasure in *Bhagavat bhajan*, singing God's name, then why choose the path of suffering which is the path of bhoga? In order to turn man away from the path of bhoga, there is only one alternative and that is bhakti. God has made me understand that. It has been said in *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Is there anything more valuable
Than devotion to Rama,
Whose glory the saints sing,
And the scriptures and Puranas praise?
The sole aim of human birth is
Abandoning desire and remembering Lord Rama.*

What is the aim of sannyasa?

One does not take sannyasa simply for a career. The true aims of sannyasa are renunciation and surrender, to search for the soul, to live with non-attachment, to know oneself, to know the Almighty, and to discover that God is both separate from us and within us, that God is omnipresent. The aim of sannyasa is to dedicate one's whole life to the worship of God. Sri Krishna explains in the Gita (18:12): "The sages understand sannyasa to be the renunciation of action with desire; the wise declare the abandonment of the fruits of all action to be tyaga."

However, not everyone who takes sannyasa can fulfil this aim because each one brings with him his own karmas. I also had karmas; some I exhausted with my guru and some I have exhausted here. I feel that the karmas have now

gone. Munger and even yoga are part of a very remote past for me. And as for you people? I have nothing to do with you. A sadhu is not a friend of anyone. He will have a chat with you and then slip away. I am also like that. I will talk to you and then quietly go. Kabir Das also explains this very well:

*A Yogi Baba lives alone, quite alone.
He has nothing to do with holy places,
Fasting or any kind of company.
He has no bag, paper, ashes or pot.
He is always listening to the anahad nada.
He neither begs for food, nor sleeps hungry,
Although he roams hither and thither.
Kabir says that he is a disciple to that Guru
Who holds a class for training the five senses.
Don't be surprised by this.
For he who experiences this,
The fair of the world is over.*

I am one of those people who slips away quietly after taking a puff. Sadhus are not friendly with anyone. Sadhus do not have a heart; it is a fact. He who has a heart cannot become a sadhu. If the sadhu had a heart, he could not have left his mother and father. They are the symbols of love, affection and compassion. He could not have left the father and mother who fed and cared for him. Such a person does not have a heart. Kabir Das says:

*Like lotus leaves that remain dry in water,
Or the maid servant who rears a child,
But remembers that it does not belong to her,
Sadhus live in the world, yet are not a part of it.*

When I came into this world, I offered my heart to God. I am like the monkey who kept his heart on the jamun tree. I did not bring it with me. When you do not have a heart, how can you love someone? You keep your love with you in your heart and this is why you have to keep playing the drama. I

performed this drama until I was able to perfect it. Now I am giving up the performance. Again Kabir Das says:

*Running water is clear but still water stagnates.
Similarly, those sadhus who constantly roam
Are superior because they gather no stain.*

I am a professional man living in society. I try to set a good example, but my sons do not listen to me. When I say to them, “Let us sit and sing a bhajan,” they go outside roaming. When I say, “Today is Swamiji’s birthday, let us pray to him,” they say, “He may be your Swamiji, but he is not our Swamiji.” These conflicts cause repercussions in my sphere of work and I am now in turmoil. How can I bridge this gap between myself and my sons?

You should not waste energy on your sons. You cannot change them just because you are their father. A father and mother only give birth to their children; they cannot change them. Let them live their own lives. If I were their father, I would have just sent them out the door, which is what I do even now with some of the swamis. If a swami disobeys me, I tell him to get out. What will he do outside? He will say a few bad things about me. So let him, who cares! I have said directly to the swamis many times, “If you want to live here, you will have to live according to my instructions. Otherwise you can go back to your home, marry and then face your wife’s beatings.”

If you have the strength to speak to your sons in this way, then they will be all right. If not, they will roam and become delinquents. Then let them die and think that your experiment has failed. Why are you so weak? Fathers are weak, they have no courage. They are only concerned with who will perform their last rites after death. What nonsense! Can sons like yours perform your last rites? Aurangzeb used to give Shah Jahan, his father, only gram to eat in his old age. If such a son performs the last rites after his father’s death, will those offerings reach him in heaven? Your sons have never given you water during your lifetime, if they offer

it to you after your death will you then receive it? No, you will never get it.

Therefore, either you become rough and tough with them or you surrender completely to them; let them do whatever they like. You should not worry about them because they are going in the same direction as western children. Today the young boys and girls of western countries have tasted the fun of the rock music civilization and they have come out of it because they realize its faults. Your sons will realize their mistakes when they become parents and their sons do some other dance.

A father has to be tough and ruthless. You have to make the decision to either surrender, let them do whatever they want, keep quiet, wait and watch, or to throw them out of the house by the ear. Life outside is not that easy; your child will not be fed. These days even the sadhus are not given bread, so how can a family person get it? The child will then think that he can go to a friend's house. The friend will feed him for a day or two and then regard him as a burden. After three or four days the child will cool down, come back and ask for your forgiveness.

One of my disciples actually experimented in this way. He expelled his son from the house and when the son came back, he did not open the door. Then the son telephoned. The mother had gone to her parents' house, so there was no answer. The son waited and when the mother returned, he phoned again. The mother tried to convince her husband but he replied, "If you like, you can also leave the house." He was very tough with them.

You do not know how to be tough but you have produced these puppies. Before producing a child, before taking a disciple, first learn to command. You must know how to manage money before you start earning. Before you start loving, you must know the reactions of love that will inevitably follow. Love has its actions and reactions; you should know them all. Think well before entering the *grihastha ashrama*, the householder stage of life. Grihastha is one of the best ashramas from a

spiritual point of view. If you live in grihastha ashrama properly, you can surrender to God, and devotion can be attained.

Before entering grihastha ashrama, many people have neither a house nor money for the delivery of children and for medicine. They have one son going to school and they want another son, but they end up with a daughter. Next comes a girl; the fourth and the fifth are also girls. Then they run after the saints and sages, but they do not help, nor do any of the gods.

Every householder should understand the significance of grihastha ashrama. There must be harmony and balance in the family. Unless the head of the family has the necessary strength, he cannot manage himself properly, nor can he manage his wife and children or the family as a whole. He should tell his sons directly that they are living on his earnings and they should either live properly or get out of the house. The person who can say, "I cannot help you anymore," is a strong, intelligent man.

To run a household or a family demands a commander's guts. An army is directed by a commander. To run a nation is a commander's duty. A weak person cannot govern a nation. Can a weak person become a commanding officer of an army? Can a weak person become head of the family? Can a man who is a slave to his wife, son and daughter command a family? No. The head of the family should be very strong. He should be strong in speech and his pockets should also be full.

Satsang 31

9 December 1994

Swamiji, could you give a message for Bulgaria?

I believe there a few Indians living in Sofia. It is an irony that Indians know all about England and America, but they know very little about the neighbouring countries, such as China, Burma, Iran, Khazakhstan and Uzbekistan. We do not have cordial relationships with our neighbours. This is an error in our foreign policy. I know everyone from Deoghar, but I do not know anyone from Nawadi or Devichak village. Most people live in this way but it is not my approach; I have a different system. First of all, I try to know my neighbours. Those who are living behind me, who stay near me or who live close by me are my neighbours. To know your neighbours and to maintain a cordial relationship with them is considered to be a good foreign policy.

If you ask an Indian about England, he will be able to tell you fifty different things, but he will know nothing about the neighbouring countries, and these countries know nothing about us. We export various items to Uzbekistan, Kazekistan or Turkistan by road or to Burma by rail. Little is spent on transport because these countries are so close, but still our businessmen are not interested in these countries. However, they are interested in England because they like English society. In English society they can do anything they wish, which they cannot do here. Muslims have the same idea, so many people from Saudi Arabia go to western countries. In

their own country they cannot drink alcohol, but in the West everyone drinks and dances.

All the wealthy people go to the West to spend money. They do not come to India because here these things are not possible. In the West they can do all the things they cannot do here. They can eat and drink whatever they like, and live in a way they cannot live here. The West has opened its door to bhoga, to enjoyment, but now western countries are facing the consequences of this. The present generation is objecting to the path of bhoga. The state of materialism has broken up their families and their religious institutions. You may think the West has Christianity, but it is not there. The people there are not born Christians as we are born Hindus. After a child is born, there is a ceremony called baptism in which three rites are performed. The child becomes a Christian after that ceremony, not before. Nowadays baptism is not being given to children in infancy as it had been previously. They say that the child can be baptized when he grows up, if he wants to be, or he can adopt the religion of his choice.

The materialistic outlook has completely broken the backbone of Christianity in western countries. This is not good because Christianity is one of the finest religions, based on the preaching of the great saint, Jesus Christ. As their religion breaks down, the people look for another religion to adopt. In their search they find two superior religions – Buddha Dharma and Vedic Dharma. The preaching of Buddha and his religion constitutes a great dharma. It teaches mental peace and shows the path of dhyana, jnana and bhakti. If you do not have devotion towards God, then have it towards Buddha, who is regarded as God. The Buddhists say:

*I take refuge in Lord Buddha,
I take refuge in the Dharma,
I take refuge in the Sangha.*

Vedic Dharma is characterized by open-mindedness. It says, if you understand this, follow it; if not, do not follow

it. There is no high-handedness, which is a very great attribute. In India, the saints and the mahatmas have always been learned people. In Buddha Dharma, the disciples of the Dalai Lama who ran away from Tibet to America became mixed up in American culture. We do not immerse ourselves in any culture; we stay aloof. Swami Vivekananda has done a commendable job of propagating Vedic Dharma world-wide. He was followed by Swami Ramateertha and then Sri Aurobindo. Many saints and sages have gone to foreign countries. Here in India there is also Anandamayi Ma. Although she has never been to a foreign country, her influence is extensive. Both Swami Yogananda and Swami Sivananda have also had a widespread influence.

What is the role of music in spiritual life?

Wherever you go in the world there is music and more music; music is everywhere. If a meeting is organized, it begins with music. When there is a wedding or a birth, it starts with music. Advertisements begin with music. There is music for everything. Music is important because it gives people a nice feeling, so everyone likes it. All the people here like music. We have given music a new face, naam samkirtan. People like it because it is music, and because they enjoy repeating God's name. People get immense pleasure out of it. It has been said in a scripture:

*One should destroy lust and anger
By thinking always of Me,
Or by singing My praise.
Thus destroy the negative qualities
By glorifying the great souls.*

Can naam samkirtan help in understanding guru's instructions?

Our saints and sages have told us about naam samkirtan. It is a very ancient science of this country; it is not a new concept. Nataraj was the first singer and lover of samkirtan.

After him came Sanatan, Sanandan, Sanat Kumar and then Sanat Sujat. In the present era, there has been Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Mirabai, Shivaswami, Haridasji, Ravidasji, and many others. All these people used to say that Parameshwara is hiding in your heart behind the veil of pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow. Worries and anxieties are within you and you cannot remove them, therefore, start singing the name of the Lord.

After singing for half an hour or an hour, you start to experience pleasure in it. What happens is that the brainwaves slowly convert to alpha. In the brain there are four main types of electromagnetic waves. When you are sleeping, the brainwaves function very slowly; they are called delta waves. When you think or worry a lot, the brainwaves travel faster; they are called beta waves. When the mind reaches a relaxed, harmonious state, there are alpha waves. The brainwaves affect the heart and the blood circulation.

Behind the brain there is another brain, which people call the superior brain or subtle mind. This brain is the monitoring centre, the command centre or ajna chakra. From there all the systems are monitored: the circulatory system, the nervous system, the respiratory system and so on. All the sympathetic, parasympathetic and central nervous systems are controlled from there. When the electromagnetic waves of the brain come into a harmonious state, they maintain a specific speed which can be seen by a meter. All the systems of the body then enter a harmonious state. When you sleep with a blanket during winter, you feel very comfortable. Have you ever thought about why you feel like that? It is due to the state of the brain. At that time, because the blanket helps to maintain an even body temperature, the brain waves become synchronized and so you sleep very well.

I am talking about *nidra ananda*, the pleasure of sleep. Then comes *yoga ananda*. No one can explain the pleasure which comes in that state. Some people say that one becomes

intoxicated by it. Do you remember Mirabai's song, in which she sings about drinking from the cup of the name of Hari? Drink and let others drink also. This is a very high quality liquor, and when you drink it you enter a state of intoxication. In the human brain there is a particular chemical which can produce the effect of intoxication. Similarly, Kabir Das says in one of his poems:

*Divine nectar springs from the cavity of the sky,
A tinkling sound is produced without an instrument,
Which is understood through meditation.
The lotuses blossom without a pond
And upon them swans play merrily.
There is moonlight without the moon rising
And swans are seen gliding here and there.
The tenth gate is locked, behind which
An invisible person is meditating.
Fearful death dares not come near,
Desire, anger, delusion and greed are burnt.
This nectar quenches the thirst of many births
And removes the afflictions born of karma.
Kabir says, listen O sadhu brothers,
By drinking of this nectar
A man becomes immortal and never dies.*

When a hatha yogi cuts the root of his tongue and pushes it up through the nasal passage, a liquid is secreted. Sometimes it happens by chance, but not usually. If one has good habits in life, the liquid will be sweet. If the yogi drinks tea, chews tobacco, eats meat, drinks liquor and indulges in negative activities, the liquid will be bitter. I met such a person in Munger. The ashram was not yet built and I was living at Ananda Bhavan. This man came to me and said, "After practising khechari mudra intensively, I experienced the liquid falling at the back of my throat; however, the taste of the liquid is very bitter." I asked him, "What are you taking which is not sattwic?" He replied, "Khaini, chewing tobacco." I told him, "This is not a good

combination. Either you do khechhari or you chew khaini, but don't combine the two." In Bihar many people chew this type of tobacco; khaini is a culture here. So he stopped chewing khaini, and after that he felt fine. He lived to be ninety or a hundred years old.

In the human body a particular kind of juice is produced which intoxicates the brain when it is secreted. As a result the sadhaka can become divinely intoxicated. The actions of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu were those of an intoxicated person. Could any normal person behave as he did? Were the doings of Mirabai normal? Imagine leaving your house and going to Mathura or Kashi. Even if there was continual fighting going on in your house, wouldn't you be too scared to leave when you had nowhere to go? Mirabai was not scared because she had drunk the nectar and become intoxicated. The name of God had influenced her mental and physical chemistry.

The path of devotion, *bhakti marga*, kirtan and bhajan, can influence the physical chemistry of a human being. The next century will prove this. The scientists, who are presently making missiles and bombs, are going to prove it. This change is the destiny of the twenty-first century. Scientists will completely give up experiments on matter and they will work on the effects of bhakti, on the influence of devotion to God and its invariable effect on the chemistry, behaviour and experience of the human body and mind. It will be a wonderful thing, and it will happen. This is the inevitable destiny of mankind for the next century. The twenty-first century will produce some of the most brilliant people who will lead others with the help of kirtan: Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare. People will follow these leaders just like the rats followed the Pied Piper.

The twentieth century, as we have experienced it, has been the century of political culture. Scientists have been working on matter, on nuclear energy. However, the twenty-first century will see the exit of political culture. Scientists

will have to change their way of thinking because the new generation is thinking in a completely different way. Now we do not want to produce these satellites. For what purpose? For communication? What communication? Rikhiya already has sufficient communication facilities. Eighty percent of India consists of villages and they do not need that type of communication. Do you think that the villages of India need satellite dishes? All that they need is a small, clean house, a good breakfast, a simple lunch and a hefty dinner. It does not matter if the house is made out of mud. The villagers want the children to live in accordance with the rules of society and to obey their elders, so the elders must also behave with responsibility. That will be the twenty-first century.

The path of bhakti or devotion is not meant only for pleasing God. Bhakti is a culture and it forms the basis of our social system. This system has a basis. In history, the bhakti revolution started in the eleventh and twelfth centuries when the country was undergoing political anarchy. After Ashoka and the ascendancy of Jagatguru Shankaracharya, there was a political vacuum which resulted in an increase in terror, tyranny and injustice. All the social laws were breaking down, and under those circumstances many eminent stalwarts emerged on the social horizon and started the bhakti movement. That bhakti movement provided a common platform for the Vedic religion and Islam, who were fighting with one another. That is what is going to happen again in the next century. Rasakhan, a devotee poet, used to sing:

*If I am born a human being,
I desire to live in Gokul,
The village of the gopis of Brajbhumi.
If I am born an animal, what more could I ask
Than to gaze at Nanda's herd of cows.
If I become a stone it would be of that hill
Which Lord Krishna took as an umbrella,*

*Due to the wrath of Indra.
If I am born a bird I would like to live
In the branches of the Kadamba tree,
Standing on the shore of the river Jamuna.
I will abandon the kingdom of the three lokas
For the stick and blanket of Lord Krishna,
And forget the pleasure of attaining
The eight siddhis and the nine nidhis.
By tending the cows of Nanda Baba,
Rasakhan is eager to see with these eyes
The jungles, gardens and ponds of Brajbhumi.
He is ready to sacrifice crores of silver palaces,
For the bushes of Karil found in Braj.*

Bhoga, enjoyment, is the dominant aspect of contemporary civilization, but self-control or restraint should form its basis. Bhakti yoga will provide a common platform between bhoga and self-restraint. This is bound to happen in the twenty-first century. Therefore, start learning kirtan and bhajan immediately. I say this to sadhu-sannyasins also. I tell them to learn Sanskrit as well, but singing kirtan or bhajan is best. Kirtan should be sung with a pure heart, without any artificiality. Shekh Farid says:

*Farida advises that one should call God
As the guard of the field loudly calls.
This call should be continued until the body,
Like the crop, is completely ripened.*

I met many scientists and psychologists in Europe, particularly in France and Switzerland. They felt that the groundwork for bhakti should be prepared and the community initiated into the path of bhakti. Bhakti means our relationship with God. This fact is undeniable. We cannot say that we are not related to Him. You are related to society, to the universe, to everything; you are not an isolated individual. We are all interrelated and the connection between us is also interpenetrating. Thus we cannot think

of a religion, a system, a civilization or a culture in isolation. Bhakti must be viewed as a universal human culture, and the basis of bhakti is your relationship with God.

Bhakti and religion, or dharma, are one. The prefix 're' means 'again' and the word 'liaison' means 'connection.' Liaison has become 'ligion'. Thus religion is very simple to define: the relationship between God and the individual soul, the devotee, and that is dharma. Dharma has this one definition only. The rest means nothing. Some people bury the dead in tombs, others burn them in flames. Some have a custom of wearing rings and others wear the mangalasutra. Some keep their wives to their left after the wedding and others to the right. Some people believe in touchability and untouchability, others do not. These are customs and traditions, not dharma.

Religion has a very simple definition: the relationship between God and his devotee, the relationship between God and his creatures. Whatever relationship one may have, that is dharma. God takes care of us; that is His dharma. I remember God; this is my dharma, and by God's grace, may I follow my dharma. This is the ultimate definition of religion. Whether to cremate or to burn somebody, to conduct a marriage in this way or that, to light a candle or a deepak, is a matter of custom or tradition. The Hindus say one thing, the Christians another. This is not religion, but today it goes under the banner of religion. Only the relationship between God and devotee is dharma, or religion.

As I have explained, the word 'religion' means to 'unite again'. *Paramatma*, God, and *jivatma*, human beings, are the same. For some reason human beings have lost their way and fallen into sin. Mankind is lost in illusion, in confusion, in a vicious circle, and cannot find the way out. After losing his path and walking for sometime, he reaches a crossing where he meets a sadhaka. The sadhaka asks him, "Son, where are you going?" He replies, "I am looking for my father's house. I do not know where it is; I am unable to find it."

The sadhaka tells him, “Your father’s house is that way, go there.” And there it is. This is religion, to find the way home again. Apart from this, I am not willing to accept any other definition that you may give.

Do not refer to what is written in your religion or in your dharma. Instead, understand that these are customs. Customs change from time to time. In the past, girls used to put veils over their faces; now they have lifted the veil. If you go into a civilized society with your wife wearing a veil, people will say, “What a strange lady, she wears a veil.” Earlier they used to call those who did not cover their faces strange. Times are changing. Previously it was unusual for girls to go to school. These days girls are doing many things. Now they are educated with BA and MA degrees; they even fly aeroplanes. Customs are necessary, but you should not confuse custom with religion. Religion is the relation between God and devotee only.

Should we then call it Vedic Pratha, or Vedic custom, rather than Vedic Dharma?

The name which is given to a religion is just a title. Take this hut, for example. It is a hut, and its name is Ganesha Kutir. Actually this is not Ganesha Kutir, it is a hut made of grass. Learned people, intellectuals and scholars have given the names Vedic Dharma, Islam or Christianity for the sake of convenience. You must remember that Jesus Christ was not a Christian, he was a Jew; Mohammed was not a Muslim, and Buddha was not a Buddhist. Hundreds of years after Buddha’s death, there was a convention in Rajgir. At that convention the *Tripitakas* were compiled: the *Vinayapitaka*, the *Sutrapitaka* and the *Abhidamyapitaka*. After this the Buddha sanghas, or missions, started to propagate. The real Buddhism started when Ashoka made it a state religion.

Religions are institutions which are formed from time to time to guide people. Christ preached some sermons and his disciples wrote them down. Mohammed preached and

that was written down. Our saints and sages gave teachings which were written down and later administered to the people. But later on, we could no longer explain the actual meaning of these teachings to the people. Religion has become socially rigid, and we are not able to change it. For example, we are not in a position to bring any change in *varnashrama dharma*, although no one actually practises it nowadays.

Everyone goes to hotels to eat and wealthy people go to prostitutes in Calcutta. These things are not hidden. No one follows the precepts of *varnashrama dharma* today; it is only hypocrisy. You maintain it only for the sake of your ego, and this ego has no value in the contemporary world. These days it does not make any difference whether someone is a Rajput, Brahmin, Kanya Kubja or Sarayuparin. But it makes a difference if someone is the director of the Tata Company, or the director of the Steel Authority of India. These days caste and creed do not matter; only a man's acquisitions and achievements matter. A man lives with his acquisitions and achievements, and these should be relevant, not irrelevant, to the social context. These ideas are found in all religions. They are also in Islam and Christianity, although now they have become distorted.

Christianity is now prevalent only in the form of an institution. No one is prepared to become a priest or visit churches anymore. No Caucasian person is being taken into the priesthood. They are taking people from Kerala, Bengal and Sri Lanka – all Asian people. Once I went to Belgium, where I stayed in a large convent. The director, who was from Andhra Pradesh, came to see me. He was very pleased to meet me, because I was from his country, and we stayed together for many days. He was a Christian who had been properly consecrated. His name was Brother Velayudhan, which is a South Indian name. They did not even change his name. Very few people change their name. All the people there were either from Sri Lanka, Kerala or Calcutta, but the majority were from Kerala.

This did not create a problem because the local people were not ready to become priests. Why would they take to the priesthood when there is no lack of employment and they can get jobs? Likewise, sadhus are found in larger numbers only where there are fewer employment opportunities. When society can give you employment, why would you become a sannyasin or a sadhu? In the mid-nineteenth century there were unemployment problems, those being the early days of the Industrial Revolution. The first stage of an industrial revolution generates unemployment. Similarly, unemployment is also increasing in India today. It will increase further and after that it will decrease.

At the time when unemployment increased in Europe, many people became priests and were sent to places such as India and Pakistan. When they came here, many people became their disciples and they were given black clothes and money. But the river has dried up, so to speak. The money which was being given to them has more or less stopped. Now we get money because we have modern ideas which are relevant. We know about contemporary problems and we have solutions for them. Whatever we say is logical, mathematical and scientific. That is why their Ganga has changed direction and is now flowing towards us. Their side of the Ganga has slowly dried up.

Now people are not willing to accept that by changing their religion they will reach God sooner. You will not reach God if you change your path or caste. You have to change yourself to reach God, whatever your religion or caste may be. You have to change your faith and your belief, because God is a subject of faith and belief. Sri Krishna says in the Gita (12:20): "Those devotees who follow the immortal dharma, endowed with faith, regarding Me as their supreme goal, are exceedingly dear to Me." God is not a subject of red cloth and beard. He is not a subject of Mulla Nasaruddin, Mulla Kamruddin, Pandit Ramchandra. God is a subject only of faith and belief. It does not make any difference whether you are Hindu, Muslim or Christian.

Whatever you may be, if you are true, your devotion will take you to God. In the *Ramacharitamanas*, Lord Rama tells Shabari that He acknowledges the relationship of bhakti and bhakti alone.

Do you know the story of Raidas? A friend of his was going to Varanasi, so he asked Raidas if he would accompany him. Raidas answered, “No, I cannot come. I am a cobbler, and I am very poor.” Instead, he gave his friend some pieces of *haldi*, turmeric, to offer to Ganga. His friend went to Varanasi and he had his bath in the Ganga. Forgetting to offer the turmeric which Raidas had given to him, he started off on his return journey. All of a sudden he heard a voice behind him, saying, “Haldi, haldi.” When he turned around, he saw two hands rising from the Ganga. It was a miracle; Gangaji was asking for the turmeric from Raidas.

Such faith and belief are the greatest human qualities. It has been said in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Devotion to Lord Rama
Is a life-restoring medicine
And intense faith its vehicle.*

Intellect does not make man unique. Man is great because he has faith and belief, not because of his intellect. You have faith and belief, therefore, you are superior human beings. If you are without faith and belief and possess only reasoning and calculation, then you are merely a sound box, fit for nothing. Faith is power and it can work miracles. There is no such thing as blind faith. Blind faith is a phrase coined by rascals.

How can I believe in something which might be wrong?

If you do not want to believe in something, then don't! But there is no such thing as blind faith. The simple reason is that faith has three eyes. Even if faith is blind in two eyes, the third eye will always see. So faith always sees. Faith can never be blind because the third eye is the immortal eye.

Is it possible to be healed through faith?

I have no doubt that one can be healed due to faith; many have been healed in this way. Faith is something that everyone can develop. It is a natural quality, you just have to manifest it. You do not have to cultivate faith; it is already there. You may have to cultivate and develop intellect, but not faith. Faith is inherent in you. How do you know your father is your father? Have you any proof that he is your father? No, you just know that he is your father; that is faith. Where there is no question, there is acceptance with reason; he is my father because he is my mother's husband. Belief and faith are inborn virtues of human beings. Intelligence is not inborn; intelligence is developed in school, college or from text books. No one can give you faith and belief.

There are many things in life which are based on faith and belief. In marriage, for example, you go to an unfamiliar house where you have never been before. You accept someone as your husband, saying that you have been together for many births, and you become united. You look after his children, you become a partner in his sorrow and happiness and you love him. Romance is also there; everything happens. Now tell me, what is the basis of these things? Respect, belief and faith. Without faith, the father is not the father and the husband is not the husband. Without faith, a man is broken. He is a person without a head, full of doubts: "Will she leave me, will she betray me?" If he feels like this, he must change. The basis of bhakti yoga is belief and faith, which are both within you. You have the raw materials: *astha*, faith and *vishwas*, belief. Now make the finished product, bhakti.

According to the Vedic system, the soul never dies. The Vedas talk of eighty-four lakh (8,400,000) yonis. The soul is the same within every living being. The soul within us is the same as that of a cow, a buffalo or an insect. However, only human beings believe in God and the other eighty-four lakh yonis do not. Why then is their soul not restless to

meet the Paramatma, like ours is? This is a very important question. Eighty-four lakh yonis represents the number of varieties of creatures. It is not an exact number and biology describes many more varieties than this. In our ancient language we use the word *yoni*, which can be translated as gene. These innumerable creatures are born out of genes, or yonis. These genes are in the small microbe and also in an amoeba.

When the yonis develop, the *indriyas*, or senses, also develop within them. Five *karmendriyas*, organs of action, and five *jnanendriyas*, organs of knowledge, gradually develop. So there are ten indriyas. When the indriyas are not fully developed, the beings are called *pashu yonis*, or animals. When wisdom or intellect develops, they are called human beings. Human being implies that the karmendriyas and jnanendriyas are fully developed. Mosquitoes, flies, bees, moths, butterflies and other insects do not come under the category of mammals. Mammals walk on four legs. Monkeys, cows, horses and elephants are all mammals, but birds are not. Snakes are also not mammals, they come under the category of reptile yoni. This is how the scientists have categorized them.

Let us take the example of a horse. The eyes of a horse are very bright, the nose and ears very sensitive, the legs very fast and the brain very sharp. But a horse is not a man because its wisdom is not developed. If wisdom develops, it will then be categorized as *manushya yoni*, human; a new genetic code develops. There are four basic drives common to human beings and to animals: the urge for food, the urge for sleep, the urge for sexual interaction, and fear. These four drives make human beings like animals. This is our beastliness, but we also possess something more than animals, which is wisdom. This is the feeling for and knowledge of God, of a creator that we should worship. It is this wisdom that makes us human. It has been said in the scriptures:

*As far as food, sleep, sex and fear are concerned,
Animals and human beings are on the same footing.
But jnana is the speciality of human beings,
So people devoid of jnana are like animals.*

The fundamental characteristic of human beings is jnana, wisdom. This does not imply text book knowledge, it means knowledge of the infinite God, the transcendental God. It is not knowledge of the Gita, the Ramayana or any other scripture. It implies knowledge about that great existence which is transcendental, invisible, infinite, beyond speech and worldly experience. This knowledge is called wisdom, meaning awareness of a higher being. It has been said in the *Kenopanishad* (1:4–8):

*That which is not uttered by speech
But which enlightens the speech,
Know that alone to be Brahman
And not that which people worship.*

*That which one cannot think with the mind
But by which the mind is made to think,
Know that alone to be Brahman
And not that which people worship.*

*That which one cannot see with the eyes,
But by which the eyes are able to see,
Know That alone to be Brahman,
And not that which people worship.*

*That which one cannot hear with the ears
But by which the ears are made to hear,
Know That alone to be Brahman
And not that which people worship.*

*That which one cannot smell with the nose
But by which the nose is made to smell,
Know That alone to be Brahman
And not that which people worship.*

Why is it that the animal souls do not attempt to reach God? Most of the souls are trapped in the form of animals, insects, reptiles etc. If they are all parts of God, then why doesn't God promote them?

Your question is very calculating. There are many questions asked on this topic. I think God is not directly involved in these matters. The Almighty has two natures: one is his very own, which is called *para*, and the other is *apara*. Apara determines all of nature's rules and establishes discipline. It creates the division of karma, it makes *vikarma* of karma, and settles the reaction of action, that which you call laws of the universe or *vishwavidhan*. Parameshwara exists only in the form of a witness. Parameshwara is not the doer, he is only a witness to all the deeds, actions, reactions, happenings, rules, sorrows and happiness. He is witness to the liberation and dissolution of all the creatures. This is the opinion of all the saints and sages.

God never interferes with the events of the universe. He has nothing to do with the promotion of the jivas. A law exists. In every family there is a *niyama*, a rule. Every nation has a law. Every tree in nature is subject to a law. For the birth and death of every creature, there is a law. This is called the *vidhan*. This universal law controls all things large and small within the limits of nature. Nature here is known as Mahamaya or Amba. Some call it Maya, others call it Devi or Shakti. I call it nature; the name does not make any difference. There is only one Shakti to direct all deeds and works, to promote or to deprive someone, and that is called Matri Shakti or Maya. Kabir Das has said:

*I know Maya as a great cheat,
She always moves with the trap
Of the three attributes in her hand
And speaks very sweetly.
She becomes Kamala of Vishnu
And Parvati of Lord Shiva.
She is the idol of the priest*

*And the water of the holy place.
 For the yogis she becomes yogini
 And for the king she becomes queen.
 In one house she represents jewels,
 While in another she is a broken vessel.
 She becomes bhakti for the devotees
 And Brahmani for Brahma.
 Kabir says: O Saints, all this is an unspeakable story.*

However, it is not so with Parameshwara, who neither promotes nor deprives anyone. Parameshwara's blessings are sufficient for us. We do not ask God to give us this or that, and we never ask God to do our work. We pray to Devi, to Kali, Durga, Tulsi for all these things. Who understands the needs of all human beings? Only a mother can understand a child's needs, and our mother is Devi. The creation and dissolution of the whole universe depends upon her. God is a witness; God is eternal, constant, absolute. It has been said in Vedanta, in the Gita and in the Vedas; everyone has said the same thing. There is a sloka in the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* (v.1:10) that says:

*The God who is the only One,
 Hidden in all beings, all-pervading
 And the inner self of all creatures,
 He controls all actions
 And all living beings dwell in Him.
 He is the witness and pure consciousness,
 Free from the three gunas of nature.*

He is just watching. He will never say, "Satyananda, thank you," he will just watch. However, Devi will say, "Satyananda, thank you. You have done your job very well."

When guests come to your house, you are the host and you have to listen to them. It would be difficult if the host kept on chatting. When foreigners sing God's name, the people here receive inspiration. When we sing, the outsiders feel good but are not inspired. When people from other

religions sing in praise of the Vedic gods and goddesses, we say they are doing the right thing. On the other hand, many people today feel ashamed to accept gods and goddesses and can't believe that it is even possible they exist. Even Bhagawati Sati had doubts. She said to Lord Shiva:

*If Rama is the son of a king,
How can he be Brahman,
Especially when he is disturbed
By separation from his wife?
Seeing his role and hearing his glory,
My mind reels too much.*

If she had doubts, what can be said of us? That is why it is good for people to sing kirtans or bhajans.

What is the meaning of Pashupatinath?

Lord Shiva is also known as Pashupati. In Kathmandu, there is a temple called Pashupatinath. Pashupati comprises three important aspects of the Shaiva sect: pash or pashu and pati. *Pash* means the whip cord, with which you catch hold of something. *Pashu* is the animal instinct in man. *Pati* is the master who controls the pashu, the animal, not allowing it to go beyond its limits. Pashupati is the master or the dominating power over his own animal instincts. He is Pashupati, Bhagawan Shivaji who carries the pash, the noose, with him so that whenever the pashu or animal misbehaves, he whips him twice. We hit the horse; we turn his tail.

Sometimes this pashu is out of control and wants to do things which it should not do. He knows that alcohol causes illness, but still he drinks. He knows if he eats meat and eggs they will give him trouble, but still he eats them. At that time he gets a whip, and what happens? God gives him one whip and he has a heart attack; another whip, diabetes; one more whip, AIDS. After receiving so many whips, still he does not understand. Then there will be many more and all his bones will be broken. But if, after only one or two whips, he understands that it is God's punishment, and vows not to

do it again tomorrow, then he will be all right. If he does it again the next day, he will then receive a harder whip.

This is the world consisting of pashu, pati and pash. Pashu is above most of the eight-four lakh yonis, and the human being is at the top of this list. Above the human being is the one who relinquishes all his animal instincts, who eliminates the need for food, sleep, sex and fear, and becomes a jnani, a knowledgeable person. He then becomes a divine person and all powers gather around him. The ocean of bliss ripples around him. He does not have any kind of sorrow. He has a body, so he feeds it when someone gives him some rotis. Sleep comes, so he lies down as he needs to. If there was only one person of this kind, if just one great saint like that were to come into our world, what a nice world it would be. I do not see a single person like this today. To relinquish the animal, to disarm, to weaken, to kill that animal, is not in our own hands. Without God's blessings one cannot get rid of the four great drives of the human being.

Satsang 32

11 December 1994

Please tell us about the different types of sadhana.

There are two main types of sadhana: firstly, that in which the sadhaka's ego is at work; and secondly, that in which the sadhaka's modesty is at work. The first type of sadhana is done for a purpose, to acquire something which is desired. The sadhaka may succeed or he may fail. It is very difficult to be successful in this sadhana which is born out of pride and ego. The train fails to move even halfway. Even a mahatma may fail in this sadhana and so a householder will certainly fail.

The path of sadhana is very difficult. There are difficulties within you, in your mind, in your nature, in your ego, in your desires, in every aspect of your being. As a result your sadhana will never be complete. The sadhana that is done with ego will always be incomplete, even when it is done by a great guru. I am talking about Kali yuga, the present age, I am not talking about the Satya yuga, Treta yuga or Dwapar yuga. The moment you are concentrated, the demons will start coming out from within. They will mislead and shock you, and you will not be able to start again. Therefore, do not ask about this sadhana. It would be improper for me to tell you about it because I would not be able to guide you. I am a sadhu. Sadhus do not belong to anyone.

As Kabir Das has said:

*The sadhu is a bee and this world a closed bud
The bee roams day and night but remains dejected.
No doubt, he finds a place and stays for a while
Where the cooling Name of the Lord can be heard.*

The second type of sadhana is not done with vanity or ego, but with devotional feeling. In this sadhana there is no intention of yoga or kundalini, there is only *bhakti bhava*. Bhakti means you have a relationship of some kind with God. You are either a brother or son, God's maya, a servant of God or a useless son of God. It can be any relationship in which you can unite with God naturally. When an element connects with a plug, the connection may be of five, ten or fifteen ampere, but the connection is there. In the same way, if you are to succeed in sadhana, you have to stop worrying about the result, be it success or failure.

You have to accept whatever you get. This is called the spirit of surrender. One should neither cry in sorrow, nor laugh in happiness, nor shout in illness, nor dance in pleasure. Whatever you receive is alright. This is called *sharanagati*, the state of surrender. In this state you have no choice. You are a beggar. If I give you a piece of stale bread, you have to accept it. You have no choice. You cannot say that you want fresh bread or buttered bread. You accept what you are given or you leave. This is the highest state of sadhana, but no one is able to do it in the present era.

In this sadhana, you do not need to sit in one place, you do not have to make up your mind, you do not even need a guru. Why? Because God is making you do this sadhana. You are His servant. When the master asks the servant to make tea, he makes it. When the master asks the servant to switch on the light or to switch off the fan, he just does it. In the same way, when He asks you to close your eyes and sing bhajans, you do it. You might not feel like doing it, but you have to do it, because it is His order. In this sadhana, which is without pride or ego, the feeling is not that I am doing it,

but that it is being done through me. Everyone should sing bhajans with this feeling, like a child, with innocence and humility. For one hour in the morning and for one hour in the evening, fulfil your service to God.

If you want to do more sadhana in this Kali yuga, I do not guarantee the results of it because, according to psychology, those who do a lot of sadhana become a little abnormal. It has been seen everywhere. Psychologists have discussed it. It is a fact that if people practise concentration and do a lot of sadhana, the brainwaves drop to alpha level. As a result these sadhakas become depressed and withdrawn. They have strange dreams and peculiar experiences and they do not understand what is happening to them. The biological functions of the body change. One becomes irritable and distrustful of others in depression. There is fear of small things, even doing something simple like opening and closing the door. That is why the great personalities of the Satya and Treta yugas are no more.

Diet is another important factor which must be considered. Nowadays the diet which most people consume, although it may be balanced, is not suitable for sadhana. People cannot afford to eat five bananas, four oranges and two apples, a little paneer, a little curd and a glass of milk. Instead they boil a little pulse and make a thin dal, add chillies and spices, and eat rotis with it. This feeds the whole family. However, you cannot do your sadhana with this type of food. The food should be pure and sattwic for sadhana. The diet should be selected according to the individual. If you load a two tonne vehicle with five tonnes of cargo, the shock absorbers will certainly break down. Load five tonnes of goods on a five tonne vehicle and ten tonnes of goods on a ten tonne vehicle.

Tulsidas elaborates on sadhana in the *Ramacharitamanas*, as a dialogue between Garuda and Kakabhushundi:

*O king of birds,
The path of jnana is a razor's edge;*

*The man who treads this path falls.
Only he who completes the journey successfully
Attains to the supreme state of final liberation.
But this supreme state is very difficult to attain,
So declare the saints, Puranas, Vedas and Agamas.
However, by worshipping Rama, the same liberation
Comes automatically, even against our will.*

Garuda does not understand why Kakabhushundi is so critical of *kaivalyapada*, the path of liberation, when it has been praised by the saints and sages. Kakabhushundi replies, “Look Garudaji, what the sages have said is all true. The path of nirvikalpa samadhi is very difficult. In nirbeeja samadhi a person should sit like Sage Valmiki, who remained absolutely motionless in padmasana even though his body was covered with white ants.” This path is like walking the razor’s edge. That is why it is not possible for people of this era, who are completely engrossed in maya, to practise sadhana.

From the day a child is born, what training does he receive? Is the training in vairagya or maya? As soon as Queen Madalasa gave birth to her son, Yoga Vasishtha, she told him: “You are pure, you are awakened, you are stainless, you are free from the illusion of the world.” Nowadays does any mother say this to her son at the time of his birth, or even before his birth? Men and women come to each other because of their weakness; they do not think of it as dharma. This is the opinion of the saints. Physical interaction takes place between us due to our weakness, because we do not have inner strength. How can you talk about sadhana in such a condition?

In ancient times, Sage Vasishtha and Vishwamitra fought over Kamadhenu, the wish-fulfilling cow, and Sage Vasishtha defeated Vishwamitra. Afterwards Vishwamitra was feeling humiliated and he said: “Fie upon the strength of the kshatriya; the strength of Brahmatej is superior to all.” He went away and started doing *tapasya*, austerities. He was so

absorbed that a mound of soil collected all around him and a tree grew on top. Birds began to live in the tree and snakes also came because of the birds, but the sound of his mantra continued to be heard. Can you imagine how long he lived?

We do not live long today. Our bodies are sick and our minds are weak. In this condition the simplest sadhana is *Bhagawat seva*, service to God. For an hour or two you should serve God and feel happy. Forget that you are a king or a beggar, a brahmin or a vaishya, a Hindu or a Muslim, male or female, a sinner or a pious person. At that time think only that you are a servant of God. This should be your state of mind.

We have accepted you as our guru, and now you are saying that you are nobody's guru. You used to say that if we did our karma, it would exhaust itself and we would come to the state of sadhana. Today you are saying to sing bhajans and kirtan happily. Is it that easy to be happy? How does one reach that state of mind?

Let me explain. I have said only one thing: that you should serve God. Whether you do it happily or under duress, what difference does it make? It is *seva*. As far as exhausting karma goes, there are three types of karma: *nitya karma*, unavoidable daily actions, *naimittika karma*, actions for special events, and *kamya karma*, actions to fulfil a desire. You can avoid *kamya karma*, but you cannot avoid *nitya karma*. You have to go to the toilet, eat, sleep and bathe. These are the *nitya karmas*. You are bound to do them. That is why no saint has said to give up karma, nor have I said to. You cannot abandon karma as long as you are dependent on nature.

In the *Bhagavad Gita* (3:4–8) Sri Krishna says: “Man does not reach actionlessness by non-performance of actions; nor by mere renunciation does he attain perfection. None can ever remain for even a moment without performing action, for everyone is made to act helplessly by the three qualities born of Nature. He, who restrains the organs of action, and sits thinking of the sense objects, is of deluded understanding and is called a hypocrite. But

whosoever, controlling the senses by the mind, O Arjuna, engages himself in karma yoga with the organs of action, without attachment, he excels. Perform thy duty, for action is superior to inaction, and even maintenance of the body would not be possible by inaction.”

You always say that you have exhausted your samskaras and karmas. How can we exhaust ours also?

My hair has become grey, but your hair is still black. One day your hair will also become grey. I have exhausted all my duties; one day your duties will also be exhausted. Karma is not everlasting. Karma is the result of your nature. While there is attachment, desire and greed, there is karma. When there is no attachment, desire or greed, then there will be no karma left. Everyone’s karma will exhaust itself in its own time. People will graduate from karma and pass out when their time comes.

I came here to live in isolation, but over the last five years I faced great difficulties. Then Bholenath came and now I can sit in peace. In 1947, my guru, Swami Sivananda, said, “You have arrived at the railway station three hours before the train is due to arrive, so you will have to wait on the platform for three hours. The train will not arrive before time.” I asked him when these three hours would be completed. He replied, “In forty or fifty years.” The three hours have passed and the train has arrived. Now I no longer wish to sit at the station with all of you. I am happy because the train has arrived. I called you all to say goodbye. Don’t think of coming here again. The greatest weakness of human beings is to cling, to stick like Fevicol. You cannot remove them. I do not like this sticky nature of human beings. I did not like it earlier. Now I do not like it at all.

As far as the guru and disciple relationship is concerned, we have two gurus, the *diksha guru* and the *vidya guru*. Swami Sivananda was my diksha guru and the Maha-mandaleshwars of the Akhara are our vidya gurus. My guru is no more now, so for further directions I went to the Mahamandaleshwar,

who was residing in Mount Abu at that time. He advised me to see a mahatma who would give me the guidelines for my future life, but he told me one thing, "If you want to tread the path of a paramahansa, you will have to relinquish your disciples. This is the first rule." I said, "I am ready to leave my disciples, but they do not want to leave me."

The guru's place in one's life is not what you think. You think that the relationship between guru and disciple is like that between husband and wife, but it is not so. The guru comes at a point of life to give guidance in sadhana or to give blessings or to give inspiration. He does not come into your life to have a relationship with you. A sannyasin does not have relationships with anyone. Kabir Das rightly said:

*The world is in fetters,
But the sadhu is free
Who keeps the sword of jnana
To cut the shackles of ajnana.*

To have a relationship with someone, you need a heart. A sannyasin does not have a heart. If I had a heart would I have left my parents? It is very difficult to leave your old mother. If you leave her for a day, for a month or for a year, you will always remember her. If I had a heart, I could not have left my mother. You want love from a person who does not have a heart. That is pointless. Love a person who has a heart. Say to him, "You are my guru, my paramatma, my God." He will accept you as his disciple. I have left my heart on the jamun tree because God resides there. God is sitting on the jamun tree, playing His *murali*, His flute. I requested God to keep my heart with Him, just as one keeps valuables in a bank safe so that no one can steal them. The devotee poet Rahim says:

*The beauty of my lover resides in my eyes.
Where is there space for another?
Rahim says, seeing that the inn is full,
The traveller himself turns back.*

I have come to you with great expectations. My future depends on your inspiration.

When a man tries to create his future according to his will, he faces many problems. When he leaves his future to the will of God, he has no problems, whether his future is bright or otherwise. Everyone fantasizes about his future, but life is formed by one's karmas, not by one's wishes. However, there are some people who can change their life according to their sankalpa. Karma, wealth, learning and death are all decided on the day of conception, but man can change it through effort and resolve. The most important thing in life is to calm the mind. We are always scared and anxious. An anxious mind and a calm mind are not the same; they have very different influences on one's life. A calm mind makes the following condition, "O God, do whatever you wish with me. How do I know what is good or what is bad?"

In my childhood, I never thought of taking sannyasa. It never entered my mind until I was eighteen or nineteen. At that time the conditions in my life changed so radically that all my relationships were severed. Earlier I may have thought of some alternative lifestyle, but not of sannyasa.

For thirty-six years I have been doing my duties with full concentration and sincerity. Now the question of my marriage has arisen. What should I do?

Always remember that marriage has become a necessary part of our social life. It is necessary because society has ordained it. However, many people have sacrificed and ruined their creative and intellectual potential at the altar of marriage. Others have entered married life and somehow managed to maintain a balance between their marital duties and their creative potential, but this requires the cooperation of the spouse. There are many children who are ambitious. Some have a talent for writing, some for music, some for social service, and some have creative potential. Children have different kinds of talents, but some are not just ordinarily gifted, they are extraordinarily

gifted. If such a person is forced to marry, this could be doing him an injustice.

This question arose several years ago in relation to Swami Satsangi. She has been extremely gifted from childhood. Her family are well-educated. The question was whether or not she should follow this kind of life. I had to resolve this question. She had said she would do whatever I told her. I said, "Would you marry if I told you to? Do you feel the need?" She replied that she did not. So I made the decision and said, "Leave it." There have been other incidents where I have had to make decisions, but no third person was involved when I made these decisions because those people were very close to me. However, if I make a decision for you, many people will come in-between.

I make a decision only when there is no one else to interfere. I decided for Swami Satsangi because she was dependent on me. It was a subject of my concern. There was no one else who could have been upset by my decision. I make such decisions because I know that those who can sacrifice their married life will be doing a great service to society. Today society needs people who can postpone marriage. I speak from many points of view. The social system has deteriorated because of the compulsion to marry and the importance given to having children. No one is concerned about the state of the country, society, social conditions, or indeed even the family.

You must make this decision yourself, but without any negativity. A decision made when one is disillusioned or lacking in hope will never be the right one. There are always two aspects when you are searching for a solution. Any problem has two sides: one is optimism and the other is pessimism. You can adopt the optimistic point of view and say, "I can do this, I can accomplish this. Even if my married life will be happy, I do not want to be involved in it." This is one way of looking at the problem. The other approach would be to say, "Oh, that man is a bastard, I do not want to live with him." This stems from frustration and belongs to a pessimistic point of view.

A decision made through pessimism or negativity will always be wrong. Only the decision which stems from hope can be the correct one. Suppose I am a married man and I do not get on with my wife. I can think of it in two ways. On the one hand, I can say, "I cannot live with her because she is bad and she annoys me." This is the negative side and whatever decision I make will be born out of negativity. On the other hand, if I think, "I am a good writer, a good speaker, a good painter or a good mathematician. Perhaps I should separate from her, and then I would be independent," this would be an optimistic viewpoint. A point of view which is hopeful will take you towards happiness. It will free you from hatred and anger and rescue you from major calamities. An event such as not getting on with your wife is a calamity, but optimism will help you out of it.

I would like to serve society. What do you think I could do with my capacities?

You will have to think for yourself about the direction in which you want to live your life. In this era, many avenues are open for girls. The time has passed when girls had to face a lot of difficulties. Now girls can go everywhere. There are no social restraints. If a girl upholds the social norms, then many avenues are open to her. She can enter politics, social work, a spiritual path, or become a writer, serve in a hospital for lepers, teach and serve handicapped people or work in an orphanage. The way to serve society is by voluntary work. Our swamis do not work for money; we do not pay anyone.

Whatever decision you make, stay in solitude for some time. When you leave your present situation and spend some time in solitude, then you can see two streams in your mind, the past and the future. When you are aware of these two streams, your self-awareness becomes very strong and you begin to see your errors very clearly. It may happen that you are wrong. As long as you are in the thick of it, you will not be able to see that. For this reason, you must stay in solitude for some time and engage in self-reflection.

There is a stream which emanates from the meeting point of the past and the future. It emerges from the past and moves to the future. It is here that one can see the errors in one's thinking, behaviour, ethics, ambitions and wishes. All of these can be seen very clearly. Then one begins to live life afresh, with a new resolve. A transition takes place only after an interval. There should be an interval of a year or so. I realized this from the people who used to come to the ashram after having a quarrel. They would stay for some weeks or months and then say, "I have enjoyed being here and have received supreme energy. Now I am ready to go home."

A man might fight with his wife and run away from home, taking one or two thousand rupees with him. He would become aware of the actual problem only through the self-analysis and self-understanding that occurred during his stay in the ashram. As these people departed, they would say, "It was very nice. My life has changed." Did their lives really change? By coming to the ashram they realized where the fault lay. Before that they had blamed the husband or wife, father or son. Then they realized how much they were also at fault. Whenever there is trouble, the blame does not lie with just one person.

The mahatmas have said that you cannot clap with one hand. I would advise all of you to do the following. Whenever there is strife at home, visit your guru's ashram or any other ashram and spend a couple of months there. Eat some halwa and puri, give some puri and halwa, and then return. Your life will be renewed. You will be able to discover where you were at fault. Our faults stay with us because we are not aware of them and think the other person is at fault.

If we go away for a few days to change our attitude, an accident can take place.

If you are going to think so much, you will not be able to make a decision. In order to make a decision, you have to be like an assassin. You must have the determination to carry

a decision through. You must not waver and think, “What if this happens or that happens?” This will not do. Life is a double-edged sword. It can slice from both sides. You have to decide which side you want to leave behind. Either renounce your marital life or forget all the troubles of your marital life. You have to decide one way or the other. A saint has said:

*This world is a bar,
While drinking you have to think thrice.
O abstainer, there is none to help if you fall.*

You were saying that despair underlies renunciation. Would that argument not be wrong because renunciation is different from disillusionment or despair?

Your question is a very difficult one. Until one experiences despair, one is not prepared to change one’s thinking. If you always have it good, you will not change your path. That renunciation which is born out of despair is not simple; it can always collapse. Therefore, between disillusion and renunciation, there must be an interval of time for self-reflection. That is what I am saying. Give yourself a break from the focus of your despair, whether it is your trade, your home, your success or failure within or about your character, whatever be the nature of your lack of hope. If you want to renounce, take a complete break.

Go some place where you are not linked to your usual activities. In that solitude, you will realize your mistake. You will experience your limitations. You will also realize what you should or should not do. Renunciation taken after a break will not be the outcome of frustration or lack of hope, but the outcome of reflection. This self-reflection cannot be performed within the precincts of your home. Go into the solitude of the forests, near the banks of a river, on the shore of the sea, or on a mountain peak. Go into the courtyards of the temples or sit amongst the saints and mahatmas. In such an environment you can engage in inner reflection. You cannot do it sitting in a park, lighting a cigarette or sleeping. It is not like that.

Please speak on how to get peace of heart.

The heart is always peaceful. It is the mind which needs peace. The heart has no problem. Everybody's heart is full of love and grace. Everybody's heart is pure. It is not contaminated, polluted or corrupt. What you need is peace of mind, not peace of heart. The mind is always running here and there like a monkey. Therefore, the question ought to be how to get peace of mind. If you want to know how to get peace of heart, then I do not know, because I have never seen anything wrong with the heart. Even a criminal, a prostitute or a debauched person has a good heart. Even a murderer has love in his heart for his wife or children.

If people meditate and sing bhajans is it predestined that either in this life or the next, they will reach their destination?

Have you seen the destiny of minerals, that after a hundred thousand years they will become like this, or after a million years they will become like that? Have you seen the destiny of trees? Have you seen destiny in the genes? If not, ask the biologists or scientists. In this creation each thing has a sequence of development and its growth is determined. If that is true, then how can we be exceptions? Our development is also determined, even though today we are living in an illusion or we may not be living in an illusion, but may have an illusion of being in that illusion. Humans are a peculiar species. Even when man is happy, he thinks he is unhappy. It has been said in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

*O King, even the best objects of the three worlds
Are not capable of satisfying the desires of man.
He who is able to control his senses
And is satisfied with whatever comes by destiny
Lives his life with happiness and felicity.
But a man of the opposite nature is always distressed,
Even if he gets the wealth of the three worlds.*

A man may have a happy home, a happy family life, wife and children, yet he thinks himself to be sad or unhappy. Often we are actually happy, but we think we are sad. Maybe we are pure souls, but we think we are sinners. How we conceive of ourselves is a matter to be left alone. Remember that every object has a sequence of development which is determined, just like an eclipse which can be predicted thousands of years before it occurs. We can calculate when a solar eclipse or lunar eclipse will take place, be it in ten, twenty or thirty thousand years.

In the same way human life is also based on certain laws. Happiness, sorrow, birth, death, knowledge of Brahman, the soul, satsang, discrimination or non-discrimination – everything has been determined. That is why I say do not beat your brow, but pray to God. You will enjoy that. Earn your bread or your two rotis and devote yourself to singing bhajans of God. You will find a path.

In this era, how can one recognize one's diksha guru? How would one know if the diksha guru is suitable for him?

When you want your son married off, you want an excellent daughter-in-law. When you want your daughter married off, you want an excellent son-in-law. When you want diksha, you want an excellent guru. When you take diksha, you want to be an excellent disciple. Everyone wants to have an excellent guru and to be an excellent disciple. This is our weakness. The first thing we need to know is what am I? What do I want? If I have two hundred rupees, I cannot buy a golden bracelet or a Bangalore sari for my wife. I cannot buy an HMT watch with only two hundred rupees. A person gets the guru he deserves, according to his devotion, respect, faith, determination and resolve.

Does the guru or the disciple seek the contact?

The guru makes contact only when he is searching for an outstanding disciple, otherwise he never pursues a disciple. A guru may pursue a disciple to teach him a lesson, but

in reality, a disciple has to search for his or her guru. Why should a shopkeeper go to a customer? The customer has to go to a shopkeeper. Kabir Das says:

*Surrender your mind and body to one
Who is free from sensory desires,
Who has abandoned his ego completely
And handed it over to the Lord.*

Until what age should one search for a guru and how should one search?

When you have the desire to make someone your guru, the search should go on no matter what your age. Age is no limitation.

Is likhit japa and reading of religious texts such as the Upanishads or Saundarya Lahari a part of naam samkirtan in bhakti yoga?

One should read the Upanishads, the Gita and Yoga Vasishtha, but these will not further your spiritual path. They may cleanse your mind and give it a structure, but what you are searching for is within you and it is even closer to you than your prana. A devotee has also said:

*He is to be found in every garden of the world,
But he hides in the curtain of flowers.*

Whatever sadhana you do, do it as an act of surrender. Do not think, what will happen if I do this, that or the other. If you cannot do sadhana with a feeling of surrender, you should not feel guilty. Sometimes sadhana becomes madness for us. We pursue it like a mad person. That is not the way, because the main thing in sadhana is the experience of God. Kabir Das says:

*Japa, austerity, self-control and sadhana
Are all included within remembrance.
Kabir says that the devotee of Lord Rama*

*Knows fully well there is nothing like remembrance.
One should practise remembrance like the cow
Who while grazing anywhere never forgets her calf.*

The experience of God is believed to have two aspects: name and form. Name is more popular than form. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, one does not have to concentrate the mind to remember God's name. It has been said:

*If name is remembered without seeing the form,
A special kind of love is generated in the heart.*

The other reason is that there is a sound vibration, a *nada*, within the name. It creates a vibration at many levels. If you chant Om, the sound vibrates at the gross level, then on the inner level, where it creates a condition of explosion. So the name is a word, but when you pronounce Ram or Om, this word goes into the mind and produces another nada, a more subtle vibration, which creates an explosion. When your mantra vibrates within you, without your pronouncing it, that is called nada, and that is the most important aspect of name.

This explosion does not take place when you read the Upanishads and the Gita. I have seen many people who read the Upanishads and *Bhagavad Gita* regularly, but they are just the same as ordinary people. They can quote some slokas from the Gita; however, I do not see that it is giving them anything at all. They keep talking, words flow like a ceaseless waterfall, while they show their mastery of scriptural knowledge. They do it to entertain people, like a *vidooshak*, a joker, who talks ceaselessly only to entertain. Can anyone say that they have attained knowledge of the soul, God or Ishwara? No, in fact, they have become like a gramophone record.

According to my understanding, at your age you should only remember the name, whether you say it in your mind or aloud. There is no need to write it. If you are in the habit of doing so, it is all right, but the energy, the strength, the

shakti, is in japa. The more japa you do, the better. Reading of the shastras is not part of *swadhyaya*, self-study. Swadhyaya is one of the forms of satsang. If you feel like reading these books, as an inspiration or to increase your knowledge, it is all right. However, nowhere is it written that by reading the *Chandogyopanishad* you will get brahmajnana or attain nirvikalpa samadhi. In fact, in the *Kathopanishad* (1:23) it has also been written:

*The Atman cannot be known by study of scriptures,
Nor by great learning nor by intelligence.
It is attained by him alone who chooses this path.
To him alone the Atman reveals its own Truth.*

The soul is not realized by gaining knowledge, by listening to spiritual information or by intellectualizing. The one who is chosen by God, whom God can mould, is given the prasada of his mercy. This is written everywhere. After having said everything, sometimes the Lord, who is very compassionate, gives without cause to a human being, showing mercy to him.

I want to do research in yoga, but have been told that a minimum knowledge of yoga is compulsory to do an MA. How should I proceed in this direction?

This problem has existed for a long time. It has been discussed for several years and the decision has been taken to convert the Bihar School of Yoga into a yogic university, which will eventually receive accreditation from the University Grants Commission. This university will offer both undergraduate and postgraduate courses. There will be four faculties: Yoga Philosophy, Yoga Psychology, Applied Yogic Sciences, and Yoga Ecology and Environmental Science. A faculty of languages, which would include Sanskrit and Pali, is also planned for the future. First of all we want to begin with these four basic faculties and then we will expand.

After completion of a two year postgraduate course, an aspirant will be able to obtain a post as lecturer in another university. The chances are greater abroad because yoga is

highly respected in foreign countries. We are looking at yoga from the point of view of its development. What do educated people who have done their MSc do afterwards? In India, no university offers yoga as a postgraduate course. The truth is that those who are teaching yoga today have no in-depth or background knowledge of the subject. They do not know the philosophy of yoga, nor do they know the historical connections. What is the connection between yoga and the Indus valley civilization? What is the connection between yoga and the Scandinavian countries? With what tradition or school of thought was yoga linked: Kashmir Shaivite, Lingayat Shaivite or Veera Shaivite? Where did Vaishnavism originate?

Yoga teachers have no knowledge of all this. They only know how to teach asana and pranayama. That is how they manage to earn a living. In India, we lack qualified teachers who have studied yoga systematically. Even sadhus and mahatmas who have studied yoga systematically, and who would know the origins of the word yoga, are difficult to find. Was yoga first referred to in *Rigveda*, in *Yajurveda* or in Buddhism? Every era has attributed different meanings to yoga. In sannyasa, there are also references to yoga. When the *Bhagavad Gita* was written, yoga had different meanings: vishad yoga, samkhya yoga, karma yoga and so on.

Many texts have been written on all these particular yogas, which people have not read. What is the relationship of yoga with tantra? How did hatha yoga emerge? Was it a part of yoga or was it taken from another tradition? What were the conditions when hatha yoga was extracted from that tradition and joined to yoga? Despite being such a great science, why was tantra responsible for the decline of so many great religions? Tantra was responsible for the decline of Buddhism and also the decline of other religions.

Tantra is a great science and there are no two opinions about that in the shastras. It is said that the best path for awakening kundalini has been given in tantra. However, those religions and religious teachers who propagated tantra

were rejected by society. Buddhism declined for this reason. Due to its connection with tantra, yoga was also rejected. The bandhas and mudras were all part of tantra. The tantric kriyas were based on the practices of uddiyana bandha, nauli, maha bandha, sirshasana, vajrasana etc. Then people saw that society was rejecting tantra, although it encompassed many positive aspects. So chapters on hatha yoga, describing ida, pingala and sushumna, were added to the yogic science, whereas Sage Patanjali has not written about this anywhere. In Sage Patanjali's yoga it is only written – *Sthiram sukham asanam*: the meditation posture should be steady and comfortable.

Where did sirshasana, vajrasana, padmasana, vrishchikasana or mayurasana come from? There is no reference in Ashtanga yoga or in Samkhya, but there is in Buddhism. Lord Buddha used to sit in padmasana with his hand raised in abhaya mudra. Mahavir, the Jain guru, sat in padmasana. The coiled locks on Lord Buddha's head are a sign of the sahasrara chakra. The study of this is essential for yoga because it seems to have united several civilizations. Did yoga originate from the Indus valley civilization? There is not only the Indus valley civilization, there is also the Ganga valley civilization, the Brahmaputra valley civilization, the Narmada valley civilization and the civilization of the Cauvery Delta. Yoga belonged to these five civilizations.

The Indus valley civilization was dynamic and mobile. It was engaged in trade and warfare and had an army. Out of this emerged a vibrant civilization, the Ganga valley civilization. There the rishis and munis created a whole literature, wrote the Vedas, Vedanta and the Upanishads, gave a direction to society, performed religious practices and rites, and understood the goal of spiritual life. This was the Ganga valley civilization. The Narmada valley gave birth to esoteric knowledge, magic, tantras and mantras. From the Cauvery Delta arose the arts, architecture, literature, dance and music.

Which Indian civilizations was yoga taken from? Evidence of padmasana and siddhasana have been found in excavations of the Indus valley civilization. Evidence has also been found in Colombia, a faraway South American country. There is a huge forest in Colombia called San Augustin, where I found ancient statues of pre-Colombian figures doing yoga postures. I published these pictures in Yoga Vidya magazine. One is doing nauli, another vajrasana, another sirshasana, another sarvangasana, another neti. Where did these statues come from? How did this civilization disappear? So you must wait and pray that Swami Niranjan's resolve to establish a yogic university will be fulfilled. Many people, like you, will then be shown a path.

This year I wrote a letter suggesting that there should be such a university in Munger.

Your good wishes are working. Everyone's good wishes are working. My guru, Swami Sivananda, conceived of a Yoga Vedanta Forest University, but it did not eventuate and so his dream was not fulfilled. When this proposal arose, the committee members not only passed a resolution, but as soon as the order was given from the Akhara and people learned that money was needed for the acceptance of the University Grants Commission, money started coming from within India and abroad. People have great respect for Swami Niranjan and great faith in him. People have great faith in me, but I am not involved. This yoga university will be called Bihar Yoga Bharati, because I want it to be very clear that I have immense gratitude towards Bihar.

There are many scholars of yoga in the world. Do not think that all highly qualified scholars are brahmins steeped in the Vedic tradition. People from all over the world have studied yoga in great depth. Their governments pay them well. I have told them to bring their best brains here, not just anyone will do, and to run the institute professionally, as a university, not as an ashram. Religion is secular but education is relative. A lot of money

is required to bring such people and we have a solution for that as well.

The institute should treat scholars as scholars and students as students. The institute must also provide a good salary to its employees and ensure that their families are well provided for, then these people will give their best to the institute. There are many great scholars who are well qualified in yogic therapy, in psychology, who have also a thorough knowledge of Indian philosophy. In our time we read books on Indian philosophy written by foreign authors. Indian authors like Datta, Radhakrishnan and others came into prominence later on.

Satsang 33

12 December 1994

Munger citizens have given tremendous support to the yoga movement. People would come to the gate and leave messages, telling us where we could collect vegetables that they had grown in their fields. We collected two to three sacks of vegetables daily. People coming from across the Ganga would bring milk and curd, because Munger gets its supply of milk products from there. People in Munger are very understanding. Here, in Rikhia, the people are impoverished, but not in Munger. However, where there is wealth, some bad qualities always creep in.

Have you any plans to go to Munger?

The river always flows towards the sea. I left home and have never gone back. I left my guru's ashram and have never returned. I have left Munger with no thought of returning.

How can we leave you? We will always follow you.

That is your weakness, your problem, and you have to solve it. The solution is not in my hands. Each one departs alone, therefore, it is said:

One comes alone, one goes alone.

Life is no more than a two-day affair.

When the mind becomes steady and one-pointed, the coming and going, the cycle of life and death, ceases. Until

manas, buddhi and chitta become stable, death is inevitable. Kabir Das says:

*The kings go, the poor go, wind and water go,
But the saint whose mind is steady never goes.*

The mind can become steady anywhere, not necessarily in yoga. In fact, it is quicker to become one-pointed in bhakti. For many people it is not possible to make the mind steady in meditation. They can maintain one-pointedness for some time, but then distractions come again. That is why Tulsidas says that self-realization is too high up. The scriptures praise it, but it is extremely difficult to attain. Even if that state can be reached, the question remains whether it is possible to maintain it.

Only in bhakti yoga can the human mind stabilize itself easily. This is because bhakti is based on bhavana, emotions, and yoga is based on sadhana, practice. Sadhana needs to be cultivated, it requires effort, while bhavana just needs to be consolidated and channelled. Bhavana for your children, your wife, your enemies and for your friends already exists in you. It is strong and deep; it is not superficial. If you hate somebody, you cannot sleep at night, or if somebody in the family is sick, you do not feel like eating. These strong emotions, flowing in all directions, right and wrong, just need to be redirected, like the course of a river.

Give some time to serving God. You have served your children and parents, but you have not served your soul. You have never thought about or tried to know your soul, which has always been your protector and your witness. Instead you have thought about people who are unreliable, those who will leave you one day. You have cared a lot for your co-passengers who come and go, but you have ignored the one who always accompanies you.

Devotion to God is the best path; you need not do anything. The mind becomes automatically one-pointed. If you take one peg of alcohol, you feel slightly intoxicated; if you take a second, you feel more intoxicated. After five or six

pegs, intoxication vanishes and you experience bliss. There is neither the experience of happiness nor unhappiness, disease nor health, joy nor sorrow. That is bliss, where there is no experience of duality, no experience of any of these states.

Although we try, this does not seem possible to achieve. What can we do to facilitate this process?

You are trying with your mind, intellect, logic and reasoning. Reason is not a helper; it is a barrier. Therefore, you have to transcend both reason and intellect. God is not at all a matter of intellect and reasoning, nor is God a matter of scriptures or logic. He is solely a matter of bhavana, emotion.

This experience is only possible for people on whom the grace of God and guru is bestowed, so how does one obtain God's grace?

God's grace flows not only towards me but towards everybody. When it is raining, one person may leave a frying pan outside and another a corked bottle. What can the falling water do? It will continue raining regardless. There is a beautiful sloka in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:46) which says: "To the brahmana who has known the Self, all the Vedas are as useful as is a reservoir of water when there is a flood everywhere." Attainment of devotion to God depends upon your capacity. To be worthy of God's grace, one must become aware of His grace. God's grace does not come; it is always there. His grace falls on everybody at all times, but we do not realize it.

Now we are sitting here and you are listening to what I am saying. If a band starts playing, my voice will not be heard. I will continue speaking but you will not hear me. What should one do? First, stop the band. There is so much noise going on inside your mind; stop that first. But we do not know how to do that. You may ask the band master to stop, and he will stop, but if you stop the drummer inside, then the trumpet player will start. There are many instru-

ments resounding inside you: five karmendriyas, five jnanendriyas, manas, buddhi, chitta, ahamkara, samskaras of previous births and worries of day to day life. That is why you cannot hear anything, so you have to find a way out.

In order to experience God's blessings, you have to spare some time for Him. One thing is sure, God's grace comes as His gift; it is dependent on His will and cannot be acquired through your efforts. At the same time, you still have to make some effort. Satsang is a kind of effort, coming here is an effort. If no effort were required, the saints and sages would not have laid so much emphasis on satsang. The effort made in the form of satsang culminates in awareness of the complete presence of God's grace.

It is only when you expose yourself to the company of divine thoughts, divine association, through satsang that you may perhaps become aware of the eternal, spontaneous grace of God which is always within you. Perhaps your breath is His grace, your life is His grace, your thinking is His grace, and without His grace you could never live, never breathe, never think. Consider this. You eat food and your bones are made. Science explains how bone marrow is formed by the separation of proteins and enzymes. What effort have you made in this process? None! You have just swallowed the food and discarded the waste products. So who is carrying out the processes of catabolism, anabolism, metabolism and assimilation?

At night you go to sleep and in the morning you wake up, but in between there is a gap, a total void. When you wake up in the morning, how do you know that you are the same person who existed yesterday? Although there is a total gap, in which there is no continuity of identity, you never lose your identity. What is this process and who carries it out? Now I am talking, you are listening and immediately you understand me. What is the process of understanding? What is it that enables your simultaneous understanding? There are so many factors which provide evidence of a higher power working in every sphere of our lives. If you think that

you are responsible for your existence, there is no greater fool than you!

The other day you were talking about love not being the appropriate basis for marriage, and that choosing a partner should be done astrologically. I have been thinking that if you turn your attention towards service to God, won't everything, including your relationships, be transformed through that love?

Yes, this can happen in individual cases, but we were talking of the masses. We were discussing the coming together of two opposite sexes for the purpose of progeny. When the male and female genes are not properly matched, the progeny will be adversely affected. By matching the genes, there is the possibility of being able to transform the genetic code. We are talking of millions and millions of people who are yet to be born. Therefore, the process of marriage should be undertaken on a biological rather than an emotional basis, if humanity is to have the chance of leading a better life in the future.

It has now been proven scientifically, and it is also written in the Vedic scriptures, that the adverse behaviour of individuals in society, whether it is crime, murder, infidelity, even susceptibility to diseases like AIDS, is the outcome of defective genetic integration. Somewhere a mistake has taken place. Of course, I do not expect our society to become free from crime, because I consider that when man became civilized and began to think, the first thing he committed was a crime. The good things he did came later, when saints and wise men told him not to do wrong, but the first thing he committed was a crime, that I know. Crime is as eternal as man himself.

Even so, we can improve the quality of our progeny. In modern life, great emphasis is placed on love. I am not against it, but love is purely an emotional expression. This expression is very important in creating progeny, but the biological basis must also be considered, which is what the

Vedic traditions have ensured for the last several thousand years. Of course, you do not have the opportunity to study the Vedic traditions and now many Indians are losing a grip on that also. However, the Vedic system of marriage, the coming together of man and woman for the purpose of progeny, is definitely a better system.

Sometimes mankind produces horrible people who completely destroy the basic structure of human society for generation after generation. Today there are many things within our society that are not acceptable. Nobody likes infidelity, yet we are infidels. There are a large number of infidels in society, even though we do not condone it. There are many other undesirable qualities such as this which have become commonplace. It is for this reason that the basis of marriage should be scientific. I do not underrate the relationship of love, but that alone should not be the criteria for marriage.

Is it possible to perform japa of two different mantras while meditating on two different chakras?

Yes, it is possible. We have two traditions, Vedic and tantric. In the tantric tradition one needs to be cautious in selecting and using mantra while doing mantra anushtana. However, that is not the case in the Vedic tradition, in which one, two and sometimes even three mantras can be used at the same time. Here the aim of mantra is to uplift chitta, the mind. All the mantras are different names of the one God or higher Self, whether it is *panchakshara mantra* (mantra with five syllables), *shadakshara mantra* (mantra with six syllables) or *jugat mantra* (mantra with the names of two gods).

The names may be different, but in the Vedic tradition their spiritual meaning or importance is the same. However, in the tantric tradition this is not so. The significance and use of *panchakshara*, *shadakshara* and *ashtakshara* (mantra with eight syllables) is different, and it is dependent upon one's samskaras. For example, if a bullet is just lying somewhere, nothing happens, but if the same bullet is

loaded into a gun, it can kill. When tantric sadhana is done, the mantra is energized by the guru and then repeated. In the Vedic tradition, when sadhana is performed, the mantra is recited and its purity is awakened.

That is why in the Vedic tradition one or more mantras can be chanted together and there is no harm done. When pooja is performed we invoke ten gods, nine planets (*navagraha*), ten goddesses (*mahavidyas*) and Ganesha. The Vedic tradition, based on the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda, which is explained by shruti, smriti, puranas and kathas, teaches that there is one truth and truth is one. Existence is just one and total, although the wise have given it different names. Some call it Sri Krishna and some call it Rama, but according to the Vedas there is no difference.

The question you have asked pertains to the tantric system; however, in the present age few are able to teach tantra in the traditional way. In Kali yuga, tantra vidya is hidden and secret. History has definitely proven that tantric sadhana is for *siddhas*, perfected beings, and not for sadhakas. Society has always rejected every religion which included tantric practices. The decline of Buddhism was caused solely by tantra. Buddhism, at one stage, had widespread influence; it was practised from north to south and east to west. It also had state support from King Ashoka. But when tantra was added it underwent a decline.

Tantric sadhana is not for most people. It is for those siddhas who are *nirvikara*, who have awakened shakti and thus conquered desire, passion, anger and hatred. If these people do tantric sadhana, nobody minds. In *vama marga*, the left hand path, sadhakas drink. If you all start drinking and say that Swami Satyananda has initiated and taught you vama marga sadhana, that will not be accepted. It is very clear that tantric sadhana is one of the greatest paths. Many well-known mahatmas and siddhas have practised it, awakened the chakras and brought nature's elements under their control.

Sage Vishwamitra could induce rains and control the temperature at will. He had achieved control over nature, but in the end he met with a very big accident. That is why you should forget about tantric sadhana. Nobody is going to teach you. Instead follow the Vedic tradition in which you may recite one mantra and then add another mantra. Each chakra has a name and a mantra. Surya is worshipped with twelve mantras, one for each month. There is no question of one mantra being more powerful than another. Although milk, curd, cheese, pera and rasagulla have different forms, the basic ingredient is the same.

Can you tell us something about brahmacharya in married life?

The word *brahmacharya* is a Sanskrit word which means 'moving, wandering or living in higher awareness'. *Brahma* means 'higher or absolute awareness' and *charya* means 'routine in life'. Brahmacharya does not mean celibacy, as they say in Christianity. It is a broad term which includes self-restraint and maintaining a holy, sacred and divine atmosphere in your mind all the time. Whether you are married or not is immaterial. The basic difference in interpretation is according to the concepts of different religions.

The Vedic dharma, which I preach, does not believe that a man's relationship with a woman is unholy or sinful. We call it a *dharma*, a duty or an obligation. Your relationship with your husband is a dharma. This interaction is not a bad or unholy act; it is your dharma, your obligation to your husband, to your family and to the society to which you will give a child. In many other religions, it is said that the sexual relationship between a man and woman is a sin and, therefore, everybody is born out of sin. We do not accept this concept and I think it is unnatural.

It may be your view, but it is not natural. How can you say that man and woman should never meet? Everyone would end up in a lunatic asylum. People would go crazy and die

of depression. What would happen to the hormones that the body produces, to the desires that the mind produces? Sex is a natural act, but it has to be carried out systematically so that neither does it pollute society, produce anarchy, nor disrupt society, behaviour and progeny. In the concept of brahmacharya, a householder who is married must go to his wife in order to fulfil his obligation.

The purpose of sexual interaction between a man and a woman is threefold: progeny, pleasure and higher awareness. This is the one activity where man forgets everything. That particular state is called unity, and at that time you are uniting with yourself. Just for a moment you are one with yourself. There is nobody else, no telephone, no knocking at the door, nothing. You see yourself at that time. You withdraw within yourself and that gives you a glimpse of the state of mind which one experiences in bhakti. This is the concept of brahmacharya.

Therefore, the sexual act should never be considered as sin. At the same time, you must remember that although milk is good to drink, if you drink ten glasses you will destroy your liver! Although the interaction between man and woman is a natural obligation towards society, it has to be carried out according to rules and regulations. Even in the performance of good works, do's and don'ts are applicable. Likewise, if you are living in dharma, do's and don'ts are necessary.

Now, what are these do's and don'ts? I will tell you. Connect everything to the lunar cycle: fifteen days (bright fortnight) plus fifteen days (dark fortnight). Have you ever been to a mental asylum and observed lunatics? Some get disturbed during *amavasya*, the dark moon, and some during *poornima*, the full moon. The critical days start from *ekadashi*, the eleventh day of the dark fortnight, then the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth day, then *amavasya*, no moon, and again from *ekadashi*, eleventh day of the bright fortnight, through the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth days, then the full moon.

These five days are very crucial as far as mental behaviour is concerned. It may not always be understood, but certain imbalances are felt by everyone. These changes take place because the brain is made up of matter containing a quantity of water, which swells like the tide due to the influence of the moon. If you go to the seashore during full moon, you can see the ocean swell; it becomes mad. Just as the moon influences the sea, it also affects this small quantity of water in the brain. That is why the word 'lunacy' comes from the word 'luna' or moon, and so lunacy is related to the moon.

Therefore, it is necessary to study and understand the lunar cycle in relation to this social obligation which we were discussing. One should avoid the five days prior to full moon at any cost, plus the five days prior to amavasya, as well as the five days of menstruation. Five and five and five equals fifteen days holiday. For the other fifteen days it is your dharma so you may do it, that is up to you. In the Vedic dharma, the rishis and munis, the great sages and saints, have always made it clear that even in good acts there has to be self-restraint. Even if you want to do good work, there must be a system of rules and regulations.

What are some of the practical aspects of kriya yoga?

As a matter of fact, for the last ten or twelve years I have stopped thinking about yoga, but I will try my best to explain this since you have come. Kriya yoga is a combination of hatha yoga and raja yoga. The purpose of kriya yoga, in my opinion, is to put you in touch with the inner being. You are always aware of your outer being; your awareness is always externalized. Kriya yoga is a link to connect you with your inner being. It is a method in which the practices of hatha yoga and raja yoga are combined. Hatha yoga brings the two energies in the body, known as *ida* and *pingala*, into balance. Ida and pingala are also represented in the word *hatha*, as ham and tham.

Hatha does not mean obstinacy, as it is literally translated. *Ham* means 'lunar' and *tham* means 'solar'. The

word *yoga* means 'to join'. Therefore, in hatha yoga, *ham* represents *ida nadi* and *tham* represents *pingala nadi*. So, where are *ida* and *pingala*? In our physical body, there are two flows of energy which function continuously. *Pingala* relates to the physical functioning of the body and *ida* relates to the mental functioning. Physical function is the function of matter and mental function is the function which is unseen, invisible. When these two functions are in balance with each other, a third flow commences which is called *sushumna*.

Sushumna flows as the outcome of harmony between *ida* and *pingala*. We can discover through observation that either the right or the left nostril is flowing and the other will be blocked, or sometimes both will function simultaneously for a minute or so. But if both nostrils are flowing for a longer time, let us say five minutes, then you have to be very careful. When *sushumna* functions and you are involved in physical activity, there is a tendency towards destructive behaviour such as crime, murder, sexual assault or suicide. However, if you are not involved in action but are involved in meditation, then the tendency is to unite with the Self.

That is why it is advisable to completely abandon physical activity when *sushumna* is active, when both nostrils are flowing equally. If physical activity is not abandoned, then there will be a big disaster. Under these circumstances, sages whose *sushumna* has become awakened, leave this material world, go into retreat and remain in meditative states, doing *sadhana*. Otherwise they are doomed. History stands witness to this. If I go into the world of *karma*, I will also be doomed. The *shastras* give us this warning.

The balance between *ida* and *pingala* is brought about by the practices of *kriya yoga*. In the *shastras* there are references to many practices of *kriya yoga*, approximately seventy-six, but of these, only a few have been revealed by the gurus to their disciples. There is a very important tantric text on this subject, *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*. The first part of this text is available, but the second part is missing. Many

scholars in Kashmir have been trying to get hold of it. They also tried to find it in Nepal, but could not. Although half of *Vijnan Bhairava Tantra* is available, a reliable commentary has not yet been written, at least not in English, Hindi or any local languages.

We have five koshas: annamaya, manomaya, pranamaya, vijñanamaya and anandamaya. Vijñanamaya is one state of consciousness, anandamaya is another and pranamaya is yet another. Just as ghee is a manifestation of butter, butter of curd and curd of milk, likewise anandamaya is a manifestation of atma, still grosser is vijñanamaya, and then come manomaya, pranamaya and lastly annamaya.

Bhairava is the name of a devata. *Devata* means ‘shining’, ‘luminous’; it does not mean divine. It comes from the Sanskrit roots *dyoo* and *dit*. Many languages of the world have this word or use one which is similar. We say devata, some say devos, and others say theos as in theosophy, which also means devata. Devata is that element which is effulgent, full of light. This luminous element is existing inside us and as the veil of ignorance is removed, this light becomes manifest. The light manifests in stages. Firstly, the light is very dim like the light of the dawn, then there is strong light and then twilight. The light of Bhairava is that of noon or midday. This is the light of vijñanamaya atma.

When I was doing panchagni tapasya, my second sitting began at twelve o’clock noon, at the time when Bhairava is usually worshipped by installing a stone lingam. But I have Bholenath, who is the embodiment of Bhairava, so I bathe him, cover him with ash, apply a tilak and give him prasad. Then at twelve noon he sits near the panchagni. Bhairava is the name of a *tattva*, or element, which is full of light. All the devatas are named after the qualities of light contained in their essence. On visualizing this inner light, some named it Rudra, others gave the names Bhairava and Shiva. This inner light has been perceived by people over thousands of years and they have named it devata. Although different words are used, they all refer to the

effulgent, brilliant or enlightened consciousness. This is the meaning of devata.

God showers his grace on selected people. On closing their eyes, they see the light. People perceive it differently, sometimes it is shadowy, sometimes brilliant. Sometimes it is like watching a night scene in a film and you have to strain your eyes a bit. This has been written in books and I have also experienced it. There is a story in the Bible in which St Paul was requested to remove the veil. He warned the onlookers, however, that they would be unable to bear the light. They did not listen and he removed one veil. He was then requested to lift the next. In this way, the light gradually increased in intensity. When he lifted the seventh veil, they could not stand the bright light and became blind. The inner light is so bright that it has no connection to day or night.

It is essential that ida and pingala are balanced for this sadhana. Kriya yoga was based on this principle. There are seventy-six kriyas, but they are not all taught. We teach ten to twenty kriyas in Munger. If a person practises two or three kriyas, starting with vipareet karani, it is sufficient. However, I have left such things and will not be able to do justice to your question. I have not just left yoga, I have forgotten about yoga. I have difficulty in relating to yoga and now speak better about bhakti because it is easier for me. I find it very difficult to talk about yoga, because I have to use my mind, intellect, *buddhi*.

Bhakti is spontaneous; if I can love or hate you, I can also love God. If I can love my brother, I can love my father. But the question is, who is He to me and who am I to Him? It is true that God is eternal, without name and form, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. It is well and good to know this, but there has to be a very tangible relationship between myself and Him. I must feel who am I to Him; am I just a worshipper, a devotee? At least I recognize that I do not understand it. I pondered this question and searched for the answer for many years in order to try and establish my relationship with God, but it did not work.

Sometimes I believed Him to be this and sometimes that. None of these relationships worked. I did not do any work, instead I used to enjoy singing the bhajan, *He prabhu anandadata, jnana hamko dijiye, Om jaya jagadish hare* – “Oh God, the giver of bliss, reveal the knowledge to me.” I sang for hours on end. I sang Sanskrit stotras, including the whole of *Ganga Stotram*, and tears would roll down my cheeks. However, this served no purpose; it was just like feeding a donkey, neither sin nor blessing came. Then one day I realized that I am God’s servant, His bonded labourer. I must live, think, eat, sleep and do sadhana with this feeling only.

He said, “Leave home,” so I left. I was not aware that He made me leave home; I believed that I had left by my own decision. He sent me to a true guru, a satguru. I thought it was good luck that I had found the company of a satguru. I did not know that He had sent me. He made me take sannyasa, though I was against it. On the 8th of September, my sannyasa diksha was decided. My name was on the list, but I refused. It was the year of partition. I had recently returned from Pakistan and my mind was reacting, revolting very strongly. I thought this spirituality, this religion, is nonsense; everything is hopeless nonsense. There is no truth in God, in the scriptures or shastras.

I told Swami Sivananda that I would not take sannyasa, and I did not. I thought that I would go somewhere and find myself a job. On the 9th of September, Swamiji called for me and told me that I had great potential which would become dissipated if I were to get involved with a wife and children. On the 12th, Swamiji called me and I took sannyasa. I thought, “Okay, I will take it.” Now I know that He forced me to take sannyasa. On all these occasions He made me do the work that He wanted me to do and I never realized it. I always felt that I was doing it myself, by my own wish. Now I have had enough. I am old, so I have retired and come to Rikhia, where I have found much peace. Here my eyes have opened further because this is a great and powerful place.

When Sri Aurobindo left Aligarh Jail, he went to Chandannagar, a French enclave, to avoid the police. Then he came to Rikhia because his wife was not keeping well and was living with her children in this village. But then he had to leave to go to Pondicherry to avoid the British police. Had that not been the case, Aurobindo would have chosen to stay here. However, he could not choose this place because it was in my destiny, it is my lot. Otherwise Pondicherry could have been built in Rikhia. Now, do you understand what games God plays? Sri Aurobindo did not establish his ashram here because he had to run away from the British police; this was just a hiding place for him.

So, the idea came to me of my relationship with God and I am now settled in that idea. It gives me enlightenment, it shows me the way and it has set my mind at rest. I am not anxious, whereas previously I was always anxiety-ridden, always asking, “God, when shall I meet you?” But that anxiety is over. Now I say, “If it is your wish, give me your darshan, and if you do not wish it, that is also okay.” My guru had told me, “You will see Him in the form of Shankara.” That is fine, come in whatever form you like.

One day a boy came here selling statues of Ganesha. Swami Satsangi purchased a Ganesha statue and said, “Swamiji, I have purchased a beautiful Ganesha statue.” I said, “Okay, keep it.” I did not show much interest. That day three more Ganesha statues were sent from Delhi. I thought, “This is not a simple coincidence, there is a definite meaning in this.” I did *pratishtha*, installing all four Ganeshas. This building is named Ganesha Kutir and that garden is named Ganesha Vatika. From that day on everything changed. My mood and the way I think changed.

The most important thing that changed was my menu. I was eating khichari all the time. I do not like any other food, only khichari and dalia, and all the sannyasins were tired of it, but not now. Khichari comes only occasionally because Ganesha is not like Shiva. Shiva is happy to eat anything, but Ganesha needs proper food. He likes to dress well and he

needs a proper room in which to stay. He is a man of certain standards. He is learned, educated, an intellectual and a scholar. When Vyasa dictated the *Mahabharata*, Ganesha was his scribe. Shiva did not come here, but he has sent his son. Ganesha is my gurubhai. Shivaji is my beloved God, I am his bhakta, and if his son comes, he is my guru brother, my senior gurubhai. Just as some people say, “I am the son-in-law of the prime minister,” I say that I am Ganesha’s gurubhai.

So everything changed. I accepted it when Shiva said, “I cannot come, but Ganesha has come. Serve him, look after him and eat good food. It is good that you are doing panchagni, but those who do panchagni must eat well. They must take ghee and oil. What is all this khichari and dalia? It will not do!” So the form in which God’s grace is shown to us, the form in which He is revealed to us or inspires us, should be left to the Lord. As Tulsidas said:

*O Lord, how can I describe Your beauty
When you have changed Your form?
The head of Tulsi will only bow down
If you take the bow and arrow into your hands.*

I do not say, “Ramaji, come.” Instead I say, “Oh Rama, please come however you like. If you can’t come, please send Sita. She will look after the kitchen. And if she can’t come, send Lakshmi, as there is a lot of work to be done by her: building houses and mobilizing a tractor for the people nearby. Oh God, come in any form: as an animal, a bird or a snake. Please come in any form at all.”

When I came to this place on 23rd September, 1989, there was nothing growing here; it was barren. That day, I was standing over there with a few people, including some of the locals, when suddenly a geru-coloured snake, twelve feet long, appeared and circumambulated the entire property. Then I said, “I shall light the *dhuni*, the sadhana fire, here.” When God gives His command, you have to tune in and be able to understand. You can only attune to God’s command

when you stop thinking. God gave the command and so it happened that way.

It is strange that I came to Rikhia, leaving all other places. I am, and have always been, a man of resources. So why stay here in Rikhia? I could have had a very good cave in Gangotri where a helicopter could have just dropped all my things from Delhi. It would not have been at all difficult for me. I could even have taken wood to Rishikesh by helicopter to build a kutir. My guru's ashram in Rishikesh is very big. I could easily have had a plot of land also. He had told me to buy land and build a hut there, but I was not in favour of Rishikesh because of the crowds. People go to Delhi and from there immediately to Rishikesh. However, it is difficult to get to Rikhia and a person seldom has the courage to come twice.

The third option was Mount Abu. Near Mount Abu there is a nice place, called Guru Shikkhar. The footprints of Dattatreya are in Guru Shikkhar and a temple of Atri and Anusuiya. Anusuiya was the wife of Atri and she gave *upadesh*, guidance, to Sita in the forest. What she said was written in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

*The most superior of wives think that,
In this world apart from my husband,
There is no other man existing,
Not even in my dreams.*

Atri was hopelessly debauched and used to go to prostitutes every night. Then he became ill and he could not walk because of problems in his knees. Anusuiya used to carry him on her shoulders to the red light area and go to collect him in the morning.

Dattatreya was the son of Atri and Anusuiya. The moment Dattatreya was born, he told his mother, "I'm leaving home." Dattatreya was not born an ordinary infant. As soon as he was born, he could walk about. He left home without even wearing a loincloth. Dattatreya attained enlightenment under the gular tree. As he walked along the road, he would

give mantra and diksha. He would give sadhana to anyone regardless of caste or religion. When someone went to touch his feet he would say, "I am not a body of senses; I am a body of manifest consciousness."

God's path is open to anyone and everyone, whether saint or sinner, rich or poor, good or bad, all have a right to God. There is no consideration of age, behaviour or karma. I have not heard that bad men are excluded; they can also go to God. When a child messes his pants, what does his mother do? She picks him up and puts him on her lap. If she can do this, God certainly will. You can go to Him with all your mess. The poet saint Surdas used to sing:

*O Lord of the Brajbhumi, take care of me.
There is none in the world who is my own.
You are the only one who can mend my ways.
You granted salvation to the vulture Sabani
And to the king of elephants.
Surdas is a degraded person, purify him O Lord,
And fulfil the promise of holding his hand.*

So they offered me a place at Mount Abu, but I did not stay there because there was not a plentiful supply of water. I had been told to stay somewhere where there was water, and if there was no water I should leave. The first necessity of a paramahansa is water, the second is wind, the third is earth and the fourth is sun. One does not want to stay in a place where these necessities are lacking. Therefore, I do not want to stay in the city. This is a beautiful place and Sri Aurobindo missed it.

Is there a simple practice that can be done to show us that bhakti yoga is of benefit?

In Indian tradition, bhakti marga is considered to be the easiest path. Every day my guru used to say, "Bhakti marga is the easiest, safest, cheapest, quickest and best path." But I could not realize it, even though I understood what he meant literally. It took me half a century to discover my relationship

with God, and when I discovered it, my journey came to an end. Now I am living because it is His wish. I am meeting you in this month because it is His wish. I will stop meeting you because that will be His wish. If I practise mouna or any yoga, or if I practise anything at all, it will be because of His wish. And if He wishes me to do something heinous, I will do it. After all, a servant has no choice. He can test me also because a master has to test his servant, to see whether this chap is honest or a hypocrite. I may only be making a show of my bhakti by praying, "I am Thine, my Lord; Thy will be done."

Intellect is bogus. We are all intellectuals and, therefore, we are all bogus. We say things we do not mean, we say things we do not feel. "I am Thine my Lord; Thy will be done." We may say it, but do we really feel it? If it is God's will that everything should be destroyed, will I accept it? If all that is pleasant, precious and desirable to me is destroyed and I am in a hopeless situation, will I still say, "Thy will be done?" No! I will say, "God, please help, please help." That is not bhakti. Bhakti is when we can say, "I accept your punishment as well as your reward, your curse as well as your grace, and all the inconveniences that you are causing me now, as well as the conveniences and facilities which you provided for me during my youth." Sri Krishna says in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

*Slowly I snatch his wealth, on whom I bestow my grace.
Relations also leave the company of that person.
When he attempts to regain his lost wealth
I again deceive him, and being disappointed,
He decides to keep company with my devotees.
Then I bestow my grace on him without any cause.*

Milarepa was a great yogi; he is known as the second Buddha of Tibet. Milarepa was mistreated by his guru, Marpa. Marpa used to keep Milarepa on the verandah and whenever he walked outside, he would kick him and say, "Get away from here, you rascal." He gave him all the rotten meat which had been lying about for many days and inflicted many other

difficulties on him. One day, when the guru had gone out, his wife, feeling sorry for Milarepa, brought him some hot food to eat. When the guru returned he said, "Oh, so you have made an alliance with my wife. Now get out of this place!" So Milarepa, who was just a boy of fourteen or fifteen, not yet a grown man, was thrown out.

Another time the guru said, "Take these boulders to the top of that hill and build a house there." So Milarepa climbed up, transporting the boulders. But one day he was tired and slept. His guru came and said, "Oh, you're sleeping, wasting time. No! Bring all the boulders down. I will not allow you to build the house." If I had been Milarepa, I would have said, "Guruji has gone mad". But the wisdom of Milarepa was the wisdom of the disciple, total surrender and total acceptance. Do we have that? And he brought all the boulders down.

One day, when Milarepa was carrying boulders down the mountain, one slipped from his hand and fell over the cliff. He said, "Okay, it's gone," and went up again to get another boulder. His guru was there and said, "Were you coming after me or are you going back?" Milarepa replied, "Sir, one of the boulders has fallen down the cliff." His guru yelled, "Rascal, you have thrown the boulder; you shall die!" He gave him a kick and Milarepa fell down the side of the mountain. In that moment he became as light as a flower, and no harm came to him. That is why Tibetans call him the 'Flower Yogi'. Tell me, whose miracle was it? Was this the miracle of the disciple or of guru? Kabir Das explains this beautifully:

*Guru is the potter and disciple the pot.
Guru removes the defects and refines the vessel,
While giving a prop within and a beating without.
Guru is the washerman, disciple the cloth
And soap is the Creator.
If washed on the stone of constant awareness,
A brilliant glow is generated.*

A disciple has to be a disciple and a guru has to be a guru. A guru cannot be father, mother or teacher. Guru is the carpenter, the washerman and the tailor. If a carpenter has mercy on a piece of wood, he will not be able to make good furniture. A beautiful piece of wood will have to be cut with a saw. A roll of attractive cloth will have to be cut in order to prepare a shirt or a coat. When you think of the welfare of the jivatma, the self of a disciple, you have to cut his ego. A disciple who is not prepared to have his ego cut becomes spoiled. There is a saying: "Why did the betel leaf rot, why did the horse refuse to move and why did the disciple get waylaid?" Because they were not handled properly.

The guru was handling his disciple and Milarepa accepted it. Certain events took place in time and then they took place in space, thus Milarepa's story is sung in Tibet. The great yogi, Milarepa, was a very fine disciple and the history of his sadhana is very beautiful. He used to sit perfectly still in a cave with a burning lamp on his head for hours on end. His sister prepared his meals for some time, but when she left, Milarepa resorted to taking water from the river, which contained so much algae it collected in his stomach and he started passing green stools. Therefore, these sadhanas should not be performed during Kali yuga. They are very difficult and only performed by rare mahatmas. You should not attempt them. I am simply narrating the story in relation to bhakti. It has been said in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

You are omniscient, master of the universe.

You are the cause of everything.

Now be kind or punish me as you like.

I am talking about bhakti because the raw material is already within every one of you. You do not have to import or export it. You do not have to purchase it nor is there any need to beg for it. All the raw materials required for bhakti are available within you. You only have to produce the finished

product. You say that there are difficulties in producing the finished product. I do not understand why there should be any hurdles. While living in this world we have become used to the 'I' principle: I will do this, I will do that, I will marry, I will produce a son, I will get a job, I will start a business, I will become a doctor, I will earn money, and so on. You have linked yourself with the 'I', but in bhakti marga, the path of devotion, there is none of this 'I' business.

In bhakti marga there is only one remedy which is to somehow efface the 'I' or ego. The question you have raised pertains to the 'I' principle only. You asked how to increase bhakti. Wonderful! You are used to asking questions such as how to earn more money, how to increase your bank balance, how to educate your child, how to send your child to England or America, how to marry him off. The same habit is continuing in God's bhakti. You don't have to do anything. Your principal job is only to discover a relationship with God. You have to think about what your relationship with God is.

Everyone wants to establish a relationship with others. Wherever kayasthas go, they try to establish a relationship. Wherever brahmins, vaishyas or sindhis go, they try and find a relationship. Is there no need to establish a relationship with God? Everywhere you want to establish a relationship, be it occupational, professional, social or academic. But you don't establish a relationship with God, and this is the most important thing. A saint has said:

*Do not speak of I and mine,
This is the root cause of destruction.
The ornament on my ankle
Has become the fetter around my neck.*

In my opinion, you should find a relationship with God. What is God to you? Is He your father-in-law or brother-in-law? No. The relationship with father-in-law or brother-in-law is a very cold, insignificant relationship. With God you should have a warm and significant relation-

ship. A hot, hot relationship. Towards the end of the *Ramacharitamanas*, Tulsidas has said:

*The way a passionate man loves his wife
And the way a miser loves his wealth,
In the same way may I have a relationship with God.*

I have come to know of another relationship. It is not that of a slave, but it is similar: Who could be as wicked as I am, for I have forgotten the one who gave me this life. I am such an ungrateful creature. Surdas, a devotee poet sang:

*If you look at the meanness of this degenerate man,
O Lord, the master of the three lokas,
There remains nothing at all to tell.
I am not satisfied by doing sinful acts.
Throughout the entire period of my life until now,
My mind has been pleased to fulfill its desires,
And never did it try to generate detachment.
Stupidity of the highest type reigns supreme,
And due to ignorance and lack of jnana,
Insensibility has made his place in my heart.
Seeing all the five cheats present before me,
I have obstinately been deceived by them.
I have totally forgotten the way to heaven
Shown by the shrutis, smritis and Vedas.
The way of undesirable acts and the jungle of desires
Is the only visible route left for me to follow now.
How much to tell, O Lord, of my deplorable condition?
You know how insufferable is my corrupt nature.
The degraded Surdas has no other way,
Kindly keep him under your refuge.*

Does there always have to be a subservient relationship with God? Because I'm thinking that we are equal with Him in the sense that this whole manifestation is His manifestation.

Yes, I agree that aspect is there. That is what the Vedas, the Upanishads and Shankaracharya have said: "Aham Brah-

masmi.” In the Bible it is said, “My father and I are one.” The Sufis say, “Analahaq.” The Sufi saint Mansoor says:

*If you yearn to meet Him, always go on loving Him.
Burn yourself and apply that ash on your body.
Take the broom of love and cleanse the heart,
Sweep the dirt of dualism from the mind.
Dread the mat of prayer, break the rosary
And throw all the books in the water.
Catch hold of the hands of the angels,
Go their way and be called their servant.
Don't go to the mosque and don't offer prayers,
Break the pot of water for purifying the hands
And go on drinking the wine of devotion.
Always drink and eat and don't be inattentive,
Roam in thy madness and go on burning yourself.
Do not become like a Mulla or a Brahmin,
Worship God in your heart, abandoning duality.
Go on saying, I am God, I am God, I am God.
The mad Mansoor who has realized God in his heart,
Says that this is the wine shop of the intoxicated,
You should always come in their company.*

We say, “Aham Brahmasmi,” “Soham,” “Shivoham.” It means, “I am equal to Him.” Of course, if one is completely realized, one is capable of forging this relationship with Him. But after fifty years of spiritual life, I do not think that my Father and I are one. Of course, this may change. God may give me another vision later. Please remember that my views are personal because I am no longer a teacher. I am only here to entertain you for this one month. Therefore, my Father and I are not one. I am a particle of Thine, even less than a particle. In *Saundarya Lahari*, Adiguru Shankaracharya has said:

*O Mother, taking the dust of your lotus feet,
Brahma is busy creating the faultless worlds
And Sheshnag somehow bears that load,*

*Supporting it on top of his many hoods.
Lord Shiva then destroys the entire creation,
By grinding it into dust in his wrath
And spreading it on his body like ash.*

I have all the qualities which He has. I am the sunlight and He is the sun. But the sunlight is not the sun. It has all the qualities of the sun, the brightness and the heat, but certainly it is not the sun. I have all these qualities, but I am not Him. This is my firm belief. The point is not whether I am equal to God, superior to God or inferior to God, or whether God is my master. The simple question is how to be aware of Him all the time without any difficulty and without any struggle. One should be constantly engrossed in thoughts of Him around the clock, just like the gopis, who used to think about Sri Krishna all the time, while eating, drinking, sleeping, talking, walking, sitting or standing. That is all.

The purpose is to be aware of God all the time without strain, without difficulty, just as I am aware of myself all the time; I know that I am. Similarly, the divine awareness should be constant, no matter if it comes by imposing equality with Him or by imposing any other relationship. Tulsidas has said:

*Butter may be churned from water
And oil may be squeezed from sand,
But this is an unfailing rule:
No man can cross the ocean of the world
Without remembering the name of the Lord.*

After talking to the gopis in Vrindavana, Uddhava was bewildered at the depth of their devotion to the Lord and he said:

*By hearing the words of the Gopis,
Uddhava forgot all his principles.
While singing the praise of Lord Krishna,
He danced through the shrubs and creepers.
In other moments he fell at the feet of the Gopis,*

*Telling them their love was highly blessed.
Running from tree to tree he embraced them,
Being highly pleased and intoxicated by love.*

Frankly speaking, yoga is not my tradition. I belong to the tradition of Shankaracharya. Advaita Vedanta is my tradition, not yoga. I haven't even read books on yoga, but He told me what to do and I did it. I did it as a teacher, a master, a very capable writer and speaker. I thought that I was doing it, but I know now that He was operating through me. My intellectual or academic involvement with yoga was practically nil, whereas my involvement with Vedanta was total. I can recite all the classical texts of Advaita Vedanta in Sanskrit even now, but I have never taught Advaita Vedanta to anyone and I have never believed in it or applied it in my life.

Now, after fifty to sixty years of hard labour, I have come to stay here and I feel very happy that I have found a relationship with God. You should also search for a relationship and one day you will be successful. Then you will find extreme satisfaction and bliss in your family life, in your married life and in your occupation. All your fears and phobias will disappear.

My guru, Swami Sivananda, used to ask me, "Do you remember His name all the time?" I would reply, "Swamiji, I try but mostly I forget because I am so busy with administration." He would say, "While doing administration work, you still remember to eat, sleep and go to the toilet. You don't forget those things so how can you forget this most natural thing, because God's name is your very breath." Your whole life has to be dedicated to this. A Thakur poet has also said:

*Our ears cannot hear any other name,
This thread has been coloured in only one dye.
If the tongue utters another name, even by mistake,
We will drown the tongue and the entire mouth,*

*Tying them together inside deadly poison.
Poet Thakur says this is the bent of our heart,
We cannot forget the Lord's name in any way.
Those mad eyes which want to see fair skin
Instead of that black Lord Krishna should be burnt.*

My guru also said, "Moreover, you are a sannyasin. A sannyasin's only hope is God's name. A sannyasin who depends on his scholarship will not survive in spiritual life. He will certainly have a downfall." It has also been said in the *Srimad Bhagavata*:

*An intelligent man, whether desireless
Or full of longing and wishing for liberation,
Should worship with intense bhakti for the Lord.*

God's name is an effective force for sannyasins as well as for householders. Your wisdom and learning from books are of no avail; they are only acquired to deceive others. We keep on talking and giving lectures to others. This is nothing but recreation. We are just jokers. These people are just entertaining others. The kingdom of God is accessible only to those who give God first priority, wherever they are and whatever their circumstances. Marriage has its place, a son has his place, a daughter has her place, a job has its place. You have fixed a definite place for everything in your life, but you have not given a definite place to bhakti.

Your bhakti is motivated by a fear that God will be annoyed if you do not do it. You perform pooja lest you lose your children or become a widow or a widower. It is done out of fear! You do not have to be scared of God. You do not have to entangle Him. It is alright if you ask Him for some favours sometimes, with a pure mind like that of a child who asks his parents for something. There is no harm in it. It is not wrong to ask favours from God. Since we live in this world and tend to get into difficult situations, it is not wrong to ask Him for help to overcome the hurdles. Vidyapati, the Maithili poet, used to sing:

*O Lord Shiva, how can I cross to that side?
 I will call the devotees, pluck the leaves of bel
 And worship Lord Shiva together with Gauri.
 Lord Shiva, riding the bull and chewing ganja,
 Roams in the burning ground heedless of the world.
 Even the Vedas do not understand Him well.
 I have neither performed japa nor austerities,
 I have made no gift or sacrificial offering.
 Having spent threequarters of my life in useless pursuits,
 Vidya Pati implores Lord Shiva:
 Knowing me as a destitute, take away my suffering.*

You should not be scared of God, rather you should be scared of your karmas. You can note this in your diary. Consider it to be my Brahma vakya: God never punishes anyone; it is your karma which punishes you. This is the law of nature. It has been said in a scripture:

*We bow down to the gods because of their powers,
 But they too are under the control of a superpower.
 God himself is bound by certain universal laws,
 He acts only within the limits of these natural laws.
 He does not control the universe, although independent,
 Rather He awards fruits according to karmas.*

There is a dharma or law of nature. If you consume poison, you will die. If you drink wine, you will become intoxicated. If you have one wife, there will be harmony in the house. If you have two wives, there will be disharmony. If you have three wives, there will be a battle, and if you have four wives, you are surely doomed. Such is the law of nature. Nature has rules and it punishes those who break them, but God never punishes anyone. Even if you were to hit God with a shoe, He would say, "Son, why are you hitting me with a shoe; it will get torn." Do you remember the story of sage Bhrigu who kicked the Lord with his leg. The Lord had asked him not to kick him in case he hurt his leg. Therefore, do not be scared of God at all. Rahim, a devotee poet, has said:

*Great souls are expected to be forgiving,
The mean minded are expected to be turbulent,
What is the loss to the Lord?*

When Parasurama became angry, Lord Rama said:

*Forgive the mistakes committed unknowingly.
We expect much kindness from the Brahmins.
O Lord, how are we comparable to you,
Like head and feet which are at two ends.
My name is very small, just Rama,
Whereas yours is large, being Parasurama.*

Do not be afraid of God. Those who are afraid of God know nothing. They do not know God. The Lord Himself says in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Don't be afraid, O Munis, purified and head of the gods,
I will incarnate in the form of a human being for you.*

The gopis used to make Sri Krishna dance for a little curd. Rasakhan has said:

*Whom Shiva, Surya and Ganesha sing continuously,
Whom the Vedas describe as without beginning or end,
Indivisible, unceasing and impenetrable,
Whom sages like Narada, Shukadev and Vyasa sang
And did their best to understand but could not know,
The Gopis make that Lord dance for a small cup of curd.
The qualified person, the prostitute, Goddess Saraswati,
All sing His praise, His names being endless.
Even Ganesha, Brahma or Shiva could not realize Him
For whom yogis, ascetics and siddhas remain in samadhi;
The Gopis make that Lord dance for a small cup of curd.*

You should not fear God, but be afraid of nature. Mahamaya will never spare anyone. Even when God was born as Lord Rama, He was subjected to the law of karma. Mahamaya does not even spare God. Even a person who pronounces judgement in the court is still within the decree of nature's

law. This is the will of God and nature executes it. Nature is called Mahamaya. She is the Goddess, the power; she is Kali, Durga and Lakshmi. Shankaracharya has said:

*You are sun and moon, fire and water;
You are sky, earth and air;
You are greatness and strength.
There is none except you
Who is all of this creation.
You are happiness and wealth,
So I remember you always.
You are guru, you are Shiva,
You are father and mother too.
You are relatives and you are learning,
You are intelligence and you are salvation,
O Goddess, you are all in all.*

Lakshmi comes with wealth and makes us prosperous, but side by side she brings problems. When Saraswati comes into our life, it is wonderful. She brings art, music, dance, literature and culture, but it makes us heady. If a husband becomes a poet, the wife resents sitting at home. So be careful with Mahamaya. If you are scared of your karmas, then be so, keeping Mahamaya in mind. Tulsidas has said:

*O feeling of attachment, you have not left the mind.
The hair which is my companion from birth has gone grey
And my false identity is exposed to the world.
The body is tired and the hands are trembling,
The eyesight, too, has grown dim.
The ears do not hear the speech of anybody
And the powers of all the senses are lost.
The teeth have fallen and the speech is slurred,
The beauty of the face has also withered.
Cough, bile and gas have choked the throat
And I have to call my son with a hand signal.
After death, my brothers, relations and dear ones,
Including my wife, force me to leave the home.*

*Just as the spots in the moon can never be removed,
Similarly the attachment that engrosses my mind
Cannot be removed by any expedient means.
Tulsidas says, he sacrifices his everything
At Your feet by whose grace all is possible.*

Kabir also says:

*Illusion is an enchantress,
It is as sweet as sugar,
Except for the grace of guru,
It would have made me a clown.*

You do not have to worry about what God will do. Even if you steal in front of God, nothing will happen to you. Once Mulshanker, who later on became Swami Dayananda, was observing a fast on Shivaratri. As he lay awake during the night, he observed a rat nibbling at the image of Lord Shiva. He wondered why the Lord was not scaring the rat away. As a result of this incident, Swami Dayananda started preaching the philosophy of *nirakara Brahma*, formless God. Once one of my good Aryasamaji friends asked me why the Lord was not scaring the rat away. I told him that it was not the department concerning God. Even if someone shits on God, He is not going to react, for that person is like a son to Him. If your son spits in your face, you will still love him. If your child comes home covered with dust and dirt and straightaway sits in your lap, spoiling your nice Banarsi sari, what do you do? In the *Ramacharitamanas* it has also been said:

*When Rama came to Dasharatha
Covered in dust and dirt,
The king smiled and lifted him up into his lap.*

There is an altogether different relationship with God. With Him the relationship is not that of policeman. God is not a policeman, magistrate or judge. God is a benign mother or father. You should understand this point. Therefore, from

today onwards do not worship God out of fear. You should gradually overcome the habit of asking favours from Him, for God knows what is in your mind and He will fulfil it. That is why it is said that a fully devoted bhakta is very dear to Him. A lover of God, who can love for the sake of love, who can practise bhakti for the sake of bhakti, is the best of all. I know it is not possible for everyone to do so, but there is one thing you need to know: Do not be scared of God, be scared of your karmas. A poet has said:

*Our karmas search for us even in our next birth,
In the same way as a calf searches for its mother;
Even in a group of thousands of cows.*

There is a definite law and that law is made by Him, and it is eternal. No one can escape that law. In Samkhya, the power that enforces that law is called apra prakriti. We call it matri shakti, prakriti, or the law of nature. If you do not agree, think about the meaning of this when you go home. In *Durga Saptashati*, it has been said about apra prakriti:

*O Goddess, all knowledge is your different aspects,
All women on the earth are your images,
O Mother of the Universe, all are filled with Thee.
Who can claim to be able to praise Thee?
You are the most powerful Vaishnavi,
The seed of the universe and most powerful Maya.
You have hypnotized all the beings in the world.
When pleased you are the cause of liberation.
Now with which words can I praise you?*

I suffer from depression. Can you advise me?

Depression! Why don't you accept it? "O God, whether you keep me happy or unhappy, it is all your sweet will." Why don't you think about it that way? Whether He keeps you happy or unhappy, it is all His will. We are mere machines and He is the mechanic. We are vehicles and He is the driver. He can take the vehicle on any path and even if it meets

with an accident, it is His will. If He has given depression, let Him do so. If He has given elation, let Him do so. If He does not like you, let Him take you away from this world. Be prepared for that. Live with such an attitude of surrender, that is all. Depression is beyond us, as we do not have any control over it.

*The whole world looks confused,
Wherefrom can we bring comfort to it?*

The more you worry about depression, the more you will have depression, because depression is a psychological syndrome. A psychological syndrome can only be treated if you get out of that rut. If you stopped thinking, the subject of psychology would not be there. Another thing is to move about from one place to another and to think as a sannyasin. Kabir Das used to sing:

*Nothing to take and nothing to give,
Always be carefree.
This cage is made of five elements
And inside is a singing bird.
The river is deep and the boat is old,
You should be friendly with the boatman.
Your lover resides in your own house,
O my dear, see him with open eyes.
Kabir says, you should always remain
Embracing the feet of the guru.*

The thinking process of a sannyasin is entirely different. It cannot be expressed. We are not concerned with giving and receiving, profit and loss, for what and for whom. We have no relationships. We have not acquired an inheritance from anyone. Our only inheritance is the guru-disciple tradition, nothing else. We are quite satisfied with the geru cloth. We do not accumulate money in the ashram. Those entrusted with the job of managing the affairs of the ashram do so and others perform their assigned duties. These should be the thoughts in the mind of a sannyasin. A sannyasin must always

have the feeling of sannyasa. Sannyasa means a trust. You are a trustee of your body, mind, ability, knowledge and money; they are not yours. Sannyasa is a perfectly constituted and perfectly created trust. It has been said by Shankaracharya:

*Those who are engrossed in principles of Vedanta
And are satisfied with the food received from begging,
Who are full of compassion and free of sorrow,
Those clothed only in a loincloth are most fortunate.*

*Those whose abode is beneath the trees
And who use their hands for an eating vessel,
Who discard even the rags, like a woman, from their life,
Those clothed only in a loincloth are most fortunate.*

*Those who have left body awareness
And who see Him in themselves,
Who remember the Lord day and night,
Those clothed only in a loincloth are most fortunate.*

*Those who are fully satisfied with the feeling of bliss
And whose tendency is to keep the senses calm,
Neither remember the inside, outside or even in-between
Those clothed only in a loincloth are most fortunate.*

All your abilities should be formed into a trust and used for others, not for yourself. If you have twenty thousand rupees, you can spend it as you like. You may purchase a cow, a car or anything else because the money is yours. But if you pledge that money to a trust and say it is for the orphanage, hospital, educational institution or any other purpose, you cannot use that money for yourself. Although you may control it as a trustee, it is no longer yours to spend freely. You may manage the fund, but you can only spend it for the purpose for which it has been pledged.

A sannyasin's life is not for himself. A sannyasin's purpose in life is to help others. The eternal law is that those who are sannyasins, whoever they are, live for others. Whether they teach spiritual life or do social service, whatever they

do, they live for others, not for themselves. Those who live for themselves are householders, although they also make a contribution to society. Their contribution cannot be underrated, but they do not really live for others, they live for themselves. A sannyasin has to live only for others. A sannyasin requires some food for the maintenance of the body and a roof to sleep under, according to age, but they do not have to hoard for anyone.

Some sort of standard has to be maintained in sannyasa life. The standard of sannyasins in the latter part of this twentieth century has fallen because sannyasa became a career, a profession, a way to get respect, honour, name, fame, disciples and limelight. But the twenty-first century is coming with a new promise. Vyasa and Sage Vasishtha, the authors of the Vedas, the puranas and smritis and the infinite literature of the Vedic culture, how and where did they write? Sage Vyasa wrote in a cave and Sage Vasishtha wrote in a thatched hut. They did not have a word processor, nor did they write with a fountain pen, but with a quill derived from the birds and ink derived from the trees.

This eternal literature was handed down, not only to India, but to the entire world as a great dharma. Though there are different religions in the world, in my opinion, there is only one dharma, and that is the Vedic dharma. The rest of the religions are simply sects. If you like something, you accept it. If you like nirakara, formlessness, you can accept it. If you do not like nirakara, you can accept sakara, with form. In Vedic dharma, everything is there: both nirakara and sakara, the worship of ghosts, ancestors and animals also, the path of tantra, the left hand path, vama marga, and the path of brahmacharya as well. There are so many paths. Vedic dharma is a broad concept.

Gandhiji also had a lot of problems with his wife. They used to quarrel over twelve annas, which is seventy-five paise today. She would spend the money on her grandchildren. Gandhiji used to get annoyed and tell her that the money belonged to the public, not to him. It used to appear daily

in the Harijan. That is why a sannyasin should remain alakh niranjan, uninvolved or stainless. One can achieve this by not getting married, if one finds a proper path in life. When one does not find a proper path in life, one is in trouble. There are different sadhanas, mudras, bandhas and other methods which can help a person to lead a single life.

Of course, the mind goes here and there at times, but in this way a sannyasin can be saved from the major accidents in life. For him, marriage is a major accident in life which he can avoid. Therefore, sannyasins should live for the good of others and not have personal lives. Paropkar, working for the good of others, has had different meanings in different ages. Sometimes it meant giving peace to others, sermons, mantras, teaching the techniques of worship, teaching asana and pranayama. In the coming age, paropkar will also mean arranging food for hungry people, as poverty is on the increase.

You may not know that when an industrial revolution takes place, in the first stage unemployment increases and political crisis takes place, as has now happened in Europe. It has happened everywhere in history. Under such circumstances the role of sannyasins changes; they should then work in the villages. There is no dearth of nursing homes in cities. There are also schools in plenty, but there are hardly any facilities in the Indian villages.

You can see for yourself in the nearby villages. If a cow comes into heat, it is very important for the village. A cow coming into heat has to be taken all the way to Deoghar for mating and by that time it becomes cold. The mating has to take place within twelve hours and no one keeps an account of such things. They may take the animal for mating after twenty-four hours. There are no arrangements even for meeting the routine requirements of the common people. This place is not more than six to seven kilometres from the town.

Sannyasins should leave the towns and settle down in far off villages. They should lead the life of Swami Satsangi. They should remain happy while imparting

knowledge and doing their duties. They should construct thatched huts. A first class house can be constructed with twenty to thirty thousand rupees. A sannyasin should live comfortably and serve his neighbours. He should serve all. The times have changed. There is a great challenge facing sannyasins, because the leaders have betrayed us. Let no sannyasins betray. Sannyasins have potential. We need resources. Whether it is five thousand or five million rupees is immaterial. Wealth definitely comes to a person who does not run after it. If you run after a shadow, it will go away from you. If you keep the shadow behind you and the light in front, it will automatically follow you.

Goddess Lakshmi has told me that if I think about myself she will desert me, and if I think of others she will come to me anytime I call her. I have no problems. After worshipping Goddess Lakshmi, Saraswati and Durga, a sannyasin should help his neighbours by way of providing them with cows, bulls, clothes, jobs and other such things. There is extreme poverty in India. If I start describing it, I will not be able to hold back my tears. Stay in the village for a day and you will realize it. They do not have shelter and during the rains they are forced to huddle together under the roof of the verandah of a house constructed by Swami Satsangi for one of our friends in the village.

They cannot afford to construct their own houses. On top of that, these people suffer because of bad customs, and we are not social reformers. I do not want to be a reformer; I am a sannyasin. If I can reform them only by my personality and not by my speech or sermons, that is fine. Telling them that they should not follow the custom of child marriage is of no use. If they understand by merely watching us, it is all right. A sannyasin has a great ideal before him and those who want to adopt sannyasa should do so. It is good to adopt sannyasa, it is a path to serve the nation. In this path you follow the dictum of treating all of your neighbours as your own family instead of looking after the interests of a small family of four or five people.

Today all the patients with tuberculosis have gathered to commence treatment provided by people from Bombay. I do not do anything; I go on sitting here. I do not go to anyone's house; I do not talk to anyone. I keep myself aloof. I do not involve myself. I am interested in God only and my work pertains only to Him. But for a sannyasin, karmas have also to be performed. Why don't you exhaust your karmas? And who knows, this may be a simple way to realize God. Who knows in what form He may appear before you? He may knock at your door as a crippled person instead of appearing in His four-armed form. Do you remember the story of Ekanath? God appeared before him in the form of a donkey.

Satsang 34

13 December 1994

What is the relation of creation with the heart?

The heart is the universe. There are two important things that you should remember; one is the heart, the other is the intellect. The heart is the creative principle and the intellect is the destructive principle. The heart is the way to God and the intellect is the way to the devil. You can see it in the modern world. Even in your personal life, you will find you are closer to your family, to your friends, to your relatives, only through the heart. If you are close to somebody through the intellect, it is only for selfish motives. If you have selfish motives, you talk nicely. You say, "You are my dear; I like you," and so on. However, you have your own purpose, which is from the brain, the head.

The heart is free from selfishness. It is the source of the most important quality, which is sacrifice, selflessness. A mother is selfless, God is selfless, guru is selfless, because they operate at the level of the heart. Leaders of a country are not selfless because they operate through the intellect, through dialectical methods. If anybody in the world wants to approach God, to have any connection or relationship with God, then intellect is the barrier. You will have to transcend intellect, reasoning and logic. Intellect can be helpful to some extent, but it becomes a barrier at a certain point, and you will have to transcend it.

How can anybody believe that you can understand God through the intellect? Maybe you can discuss God through

the intellect, but you cannot feel Him. The intellect cannot realize or feel God; it is beyond the capacity of an intellectual. There are many great thinkers in the world, many intellectuals who can write book after book, but they have never had the faintest experience of the Divine. To have an experience of God, or of the whole universe, the absolute totality, you need heart. You express your feelings through the heart. What is feeling? Love, hatred, passion, sacrifice and anger are feelings. You feel them, you do not see them. Similarly, you cannot see God. You cannot say, "Show me God, then I will believe in Him." No, God has to be felt.

God has to be felt just as a mother's love or a friend's love is felt. The feeling of friendliness or even hatred is called *bhava*. It is an attitude of the heart. Man has various attitudes in him which are fully matured. You do not have to learn how to develop your heart. Every human being, whether a saint or an ordinary person, a child, a young lady, an old man or even an infant of two years, has a fully developed heart, because they can feel love, pain, animosity and hatred. You do not have to develop feelings; they are natural for every living being, not only human beings. Trees and animals have feelings. It is the natural tendency of every living being to react; chemicals react. This reaction to each other is an outcome of feeling.

You have asked about the relationship between the universe and the heart. It is such a small question, but in order to get to the root of it, the most important thing that you have to understand is that God is the centre of the universe. The heart is the eye through which you can see Him. You will never be able to see Him without heart. You may study the scriptures, the Puranas, the Koran and the Bible, but it will be to no avail. You can only see God through the eyes of your heart. The same God is the centre, the inner soul, of the universe and the totality of the universe. God and the universe are identical; there is absolutely no difference. In the *Ramacharitamanas* it has been said:

*Knowing the whole world
Is pervaded by Sita and Rama,
I bow down to it, folding both my hands.*

How can we develop bhakti, love for God?

This is a very important question and a very difficult one. I can answer it very well because it is my pet subject. It is also your pet subject because love is the desire of everyone. Everybody wants to love and be loved. Love is something which you know. I don't have to teach you about love, but about how to streamline this love from matter to spirit. How can the love which you have for the material world be channelled towards God? How can you acquire divine love when you have feelings for the material world? When you love the world, you are running after a shadow. When you love God, you are running against the shadow, you are running after light. If you follow the light, the shadow will follow you. In the *Narada Bhakti Sutras* it has been said:

*Teachers have sung the way of attaining bhakti.
Devotion to God is achieved by abandonment of both
Sensual pleasures and attachment to sensual objects.
By uninterrupted worship, success is attained.
Bhakti develops from listening to and singing
The attributes and glories of the Lord,
Even while engaged in the activities of life,
But devotion is obtained chiefly through satsang
Of saints or even a slight measure of Divine grace.
The company of great souls is infallible in its effect
Because it is obtained by the grace of God alone.
There is no difference between God and His devotees.
Let that alone be practised, let that alone be practised.*

In the *Ramacharitamanas* it has also been said:

*Now I am fully convinced, O Hanuman,
That without the grace of God
It is not possible to meet the saints.*

So, love is natural to every human being. You have also been practising it. You love your children, you love your parents, you love your husband or wife, boyfriend or girlfriend. You know how absorbing love is; it consumes the entire attention so that the mind becomes one-pointed. When you are full of passion, hatred or affection for your children, then the total mind is consumed, and nothing else can get into your head at that time. Therefore, it is evident that you should direct this love to God, but you cannot just do that. In order to love somebody, you have to discover a relationship that is logical.

She is my girlfriend, he is my boyfriend, he is my son, she is my mother; you have discovered these relationships. You have to discover and forge a relationship. Until you know the relationship, how can you love somebody? You cannot love God unless you have realized who He is to you and who you are to Him. Where do you stand? First of all, ascertain and discover what relationship you have with God. Is God your father, your mother, your husband, your boyfriend, your son, your friend or your master? Who is He? You have to be very, very clear about Him. I have already told you one truth, that love is natural to everyone. The second truth is that everyone is connected with God. You do not have to connect yourself with God, you have to discover Him.

Many saints have considered God as their beloved. You know the famous theory of the bridegroom in Christianity. In Christianity a lot of emphasis is placed on the bride and bridegroom relationship, which is similar to the Radha-Sri Krishna relationship. They call it bride and bridegroom; we call it the love of Radha and Sri Krishna, or the union of Shiva and Shakti. Many great saints have loved God as if He were their husband or wife. Many have loved God as if He were their master.

There are people who think that they and God are identical. In the Upanishads, it is written, *Aham Brahmasmi*, "I am Brahman"; *Shivoham*, "I am Shiva"; *Soham*, "I am That"; *Satchidananda Swarupoham*, "I am the form of truth, consciousness and bliss". That is a relationship. The

Sufis say *Analhak*, “I am truth”; that is also a relationship. Maybe you can feel it. Shankaracharya used to say, “Aham Brahmasmi.” Many of the ancient scriptures say, “Aham Brahmasmi.” Even in the Bible, Christ said, “My Father and I are one.” However, in the same Bible, Christ said, “My Father in heaven,” and “I am the son of God,” which means he realized that God was his father and he was the son; he was not identical to God, but different.

In this way there is not only one relationship with God, but many relationships which you will have to discover for yourself. There is also another relationship with God. “You are my master and I am your servant. Tell me what I have to do. If you ask me to lead a spiritual life, I will lead it. If you ask me to get into the maya, I will do it. I have no choice because I am your servant. My duty is to serve you twenty-four hours a day, throughout life, because I am your servant. Make me your servant; I will work as a gardener, I will wash your clothes, I will look after the kitchen. I will do everything for you, so that I can see you every time.’ This is also a good bhava. There are many other attitudes and relationships, such as the unworthy son or daughter. “I am so ungrateful that I have forgotten you, but still I am yours. I am your hopeless son, your hopeless daughter! I am not going to leave your door. Now I beg you to either redeem me or send me to hell.”

These are the bhavas, the feelings, of a human being; they come from the depths of the heart. You can feel them. You should relate to God with all of your sincerity and truth, from the heart, because you are talking to somebody who is no different to you, who is your own being. You are talking to yourself, so be sincere, because you can cheat the whole world, but you cannot cheat yourself. God is within you, and He knows very well what you are thinking, rationalizing and feeling, whatever you are. Or maybe that is all happening because He is doing it. Who knows, maybe He knows whatever you and I are feeling and thinking because He is everything in life.

You have been thinking of all that is useless in this world, because of your karma, your nature, your negative

propensities. You take care of your husband or wife and children. You work hard day and night to earn money for their support, until you become old and they have all left you. But you have never taken care of Him, although He has taken care of you throughout your life.

From the time you entered your mother's womb, for nine months He looked after you. After that, when you were a small infant, He looked after you. Even now He is looking after you because you do not know how to breathe; He is making you breathe. You do not know how to digest food; He is digesting it for you. You do not know how to sleep; He is making you sleep. If you suffer from sleeplessness, you don't know how to sleep! You are not able to sleep without consuming sleeping pills. He makes you digest the food; He breaks it into enzymes, anabolizes it, catabolizes it, metabolizes it and causes the processes of assimilation in this body. You don't do anything, you just eat. He has looked after you at every step of your life, but you have never cared for Him, which means you have been ungrateful. In the Gita (15:14) Sri Krishna says: "Abiding in the body of living beings as Vaishwanara, and associated with prana and the apana, I digest the fourfold food."

These are the methods through which the bhavana of bhakti can be developed. You have to know that you have forgotten God. You may talk about Him, read about Him and want Him as well, but you have not worked for Him as much as you have worked for money, profession, success, children. How hard you work, day and night. Sometimes you even have a heart attack, but nobody ever died of a heart attack because he loved God! Name one person who has had a heart attack while remembering God. People have died of heart attacks while working for their sons and daughters, but nobody has died of a heart attack while remembering God. Such is our plight.

It has become a routine for us, but still everyone talks about God. There was a very wealthy man staying here. One day the thought came to his mind that he was going crazy because he was working so hard for his family all day while

they were all enjoying themselves. They had the cheek to ask him why he was visiting India to learn yoga. What would he do after learning yoga? Being the breadwinner for the entire family, he told them that they had no business asking him such questions. He disposed of his business and property and told his family to support themselves.

He had a fully computerized motor caravan built for himself, which is just like a small palace. Its tyres are also computerized. It has a flush system and the waste products are shredded inside. He prepares his meals inside the caravan. He travels throughout the world, year round, and he claims that life is meant to be lived and the whole world is open to him. Running after the children like crazy people is said to be a social obligation, a duty, but I do not consider it to be a duty; rather it is your weakness. You do not understand that your real obligation is not social, it is spiritual; it is to yourself and to God. The scriptures say:

*The Vaishnavas are anxious in vain
For their food and lodging.
That God who takes care of the whole world,
Will He ever ignore His servants?*

If you feel that you are needed by your family, and it is your obligation to maintain them and look after their comfort, then from today onwards stop crying. There should be no unhappiness in life for you. On the one hand, you are unhappy because your son does not study, or your wife does not listen to you and quarrels with you daily, or the cost of living has gone up, or the business is failing. On the other hand, you do not want to leave this materialistic world. Ramakrishna Paramahansa once asked a person who was clinging onto a tree to let go of it. The person replied that it was not his attachment, but the tree itself was clinging onto him. You see, it is you who are clinging onto this materialistic world. That is why it is holding onto you.

Therefore, for a person who wants to follow a path leading to God, there cannot be a better path than bhakti.

Note down in your diary that the happiness and pleasure which you had expected, but did not receive from your wife, son, parents and wealth, will definitely come to you through devotion to God. Tulsidas has said:

*Is there any greater benefit than the bhakti of the Lord
Of whom the Vedas, saints and Puranas sing?
Is there any adversity in this world
Equal to not singing praises of Rama,
After getting the body of a human being?*

You must have desired some pleasure from loving your parents, your wife, your friends, but what did you get? Nothing. You must have expected all sorts of pleasure when you started a business with your friends, but did that come about? Yes, you got a few drops of pleasure, but only after undergoing tons of pain. You spent your entire life looking for that drop of pleasure, but still you did not get it. This is how the world moves. In spite of it, man never realizes why the great saints and sages of the past were so happy wearing a loin cloth, or even being beggars. They had disciples of both sexes, constructed ashrams and temples, performed their karmas, travelled the length and breadth of their own country and abroad. In fact, they did everything, like Swami Vivekananda.

What is that pleasure and what is that bliss? Have I come to this world to earn money in order to get pleasure? Is this the aim of my life? No, the aim of my life is to seek happiness and bliss and to get rid of unhappiness and pain. Total cessation of pain and attainment of absolute happiness is the desire of every living being. When a dog feels cold, it goes under the bed. It does not want to undergo pain. No one wants unhappiness. Everyone wants happiness of the type which never ends, but wherever we go in search of that happiness, we find nothing but unhappiness and disappointment. This is because our search for pleasure, happiness, satisfaction and gratification is based on those things which are ultimately frustrating.

Therefore, each and everyone who is searching for a reliable path will have to discover God and their relationship with Him. You will have to give as much as possible of yourself. Even half-hearted devotion to God will bring you full dividends. Even if you love Him half-heartedly, you will receive His full grace. In the *Srimad Bhagavata*, Shukdev has also said:

*If a depraved or afflicted person,
Even in laughter without any intent,
Suddenly pronounces the name of the Lord,
Which he has heard chanted or sung,
He at once destroys all his sins
Together with those of others.
How can a man wishing for salvation
Leave the shelter of such a Lord?*

It has also been said:

*Even if a helpless man speaks the names of Hari
At the time of falling, with his feet slipping
And bones fracturing, while being poisoned by serpents,
Burning in fire or enduring pain of any kind,
He will be freed from the torments of the God of death.*

You want God to bless you with a son, so you promise to offer one litre of milk in the temple. He blesses you and in exchange you spend just eight rupees, no more than that, on a litre of milk. Many people do not offer even one litre of milk. They say that they go for His darshan every Monday, but they do not spend anything on darshan. You make excuses and live with pain, putting to one side such a gracious and compassionate Lord. You live with pain in order to fulfil the plans of your lives. What logic is this? Your first and foremost duty is towards God. God is your first duty. You may not agree with me now, but one day you will.

Most of you are used to anxiety, worry, dissatisfaction and pain, and you do not want to leave them. Take the example of a pig. You can offer it delicious halwa, but it would rather eat

filth because that has become its habit. It may be that we have also become like that. Who knows? Tulsidas has rightly said:

*The mind never remains peaceful, forgetting comforts
It roams hither and thither, extending the senses.
Although it endures unbearable miseries
Through involvement in sensory enjoyment,
And is entangled in frightful snares,
Still this foolish mind does not abandon its quest.
Due to delusion, even knowing, it remains ignorant.
In different births it has performed so many actions
Which have smeared the heart with mud and filth.
The Vedas and Puranas proclaim it cannot become clean
Without the water of detachment and discretion.
Tulsidas says, when will this thirst be quenched
If life is spent in digging the tank?*

You see, this has been one of the basic questions in my life. After coming to Rikhia, I was enlightened and discovered my relationship with God. For fifty to sixty years I did not know it. No. But I have now discovered that relationship. There is a bhajan by Mirabai:

*Please keep me as you servant.
If I live as your servant,
I will plant trees in your garden
And get a chance to have your darshan every day.
In the streets of Vrindavan I shall sing your glories.
Please keep me as your servant.*

There were so many events in my life where I always thought I was the doer, the main entity, that whatever happened was because of me. But today, after fifty to sixty years, towards the fag end of my life, I have realized that God is the doer and whatever has happened in my life is all due to Him. He made me do all these things. What a fool I was! Had I known earlier that He was making me do all these things, at least I would have enjoyed all those years. But today it is all bliss. The pursuits of my spiritual life are fulfilled and I do not

require anything now. Give your darshan to me if you so will, otherwise I do not deserve it. For it is His will that prevails. I am only His servant and a servant has no choice. What choice does a servant have? Tulsidas has said:

*I have ruined myself so far but no longer.
By the grace of Lord Rama,
The night of this world has come to an end.
After rising this time, I will never go to bed again.
I have received the beautiful diamond of name,
Which fulfils all the devotee's wishes
I will not allow it to fall from my heart.
The Lord's form is a touchstone, beautiful and pure;
I will touch my heart to it and be free.
The senses laugh, thinking me to be under their control;
Now I will arise and become my own master,
Giving them no further opportunity to mock me.
Tulsidas says, I now promise to retain
My beelike mind at the lotus feet of the Lord.*

One day a boy was selling images of Lord Ganesha made of clay. A swami purchased one and showed it to me. The same day three more images of Lord Ganesha were received from Delhi, some made of *ashta dhatu*, eight metals, and some of stone. Then I realized that this had some great significance. So all four idols of Lord Ganesha were installed here in Ganesha Kutir, where Lord Ganesha resides. Then I thought that since Lord Shankara cannot come, he has sent his son, Ganesha. Lord Shiva is my ishta devata and I am his devotee, thus Lord Ganesha is my gurubhai. Lord Shiva told me that he could not come as He was too busy, but he was sending His son and my gurubhai.

He told me further to serve him well, since he is not like his father. Lord Shiva is unconcerned about his comforts. He takes ganja and is always in an avadhoota state. You cannot clean the place when He is around. On the other hand Lord Ganesha is tip-top and likes to eat well. Ever since he arrived, my way of thinking has entirely changed. I have

to serve Lord Ganesha and so I have to prepare nice food now. Khichari is a thing of the past. Now someone comes to prepare puris, parathas, halwa, cake and chocolate for him. Lord Ganesha is very fond of modaks and the deity who is fond of modaks gives us prosperity in return. Lord Ganesha has a big belly and without a big belly you cannot enjoy all this. However, this is not the fact in relation to Gorakhanath, of whom it is said:

*When you have fat buttocks and fat stomach,
It means, O Gorakh, that you have not met a Guru.*

It is the fashion these days to have a lean physical frame because people think that otherwise they will have a heart attack or high blood pressure. Lord Buddha did not have high blood pressure or heart attacks, although he was very fat. Lord Mahavira was also fat. My guru was also very fat and the seat on which he sat would often break under his weight. Once, in 1950, Swamiji visited Banaras Hindu University. He used to enjoy dancing and started dancing to the tune of 'Agara Bam, Agara Bam, Baje Damaru,' and the seat gave way. The professor of philosophy saved him with difficulty, otherwise he would have hurt his foot.

Since it is a question of keeping Lord Ganesha happy, I have to keep that bhava, that feeling, that whatever He wills I do. I have often heard the voice of the Lord. I have received many things in my life on hearing such commands. One of the reasons for my success can be attributed to that. When I propagated yoga like a bulldozer in the West and had the scientists shave their heads, it was possible only because I knew where to go and where not. I always received full instructions from Him.

I received an order from Him about two years ago. This time the command was, "Love your neighbours as I have loved you. Provide them with the same facilities as I have provided for you." These are the two commands that I have received. The moment I received these commands, the means to implement them also started flowing in. We have

not had any problems. Someone from Dhanbad has given us a tractor. Within fifteen days all the fields of the nearby villagers who did not possess bullocks were ploughed for planting. Fifty to seventy acres of land was tilled. All this has happened automatically. I did not have to do anything. I did not go from village to village or from door to door.

*I do not perform any action,
Another person causes it to be done.
I am only a tool or a machine,
The operator is someone else.*

I am a servant of God; I am not the doer. He is the doer, the supreme power, the Lord of divine faculties. He possesses six divine faculties. He selects someone to be His servant, someone to be His son, someone to be His counsellor or His exponent. He has chosen me as His servant. Thus my spiritual journey has now come to an end. As long as I thought that I should do this or that sadhana, my spiritual journey was incomplete. Now I have decided that whatever You tell me to do, I will do. I can even throw away my mala. What is there now in asana, pranayama, japa and dhyana? Why should there be ego, anxiety and neurosis in sadhana? Oh God, when shall I meet you? When will you come? Have mercy on me; give me your darshan. I am your servant. If you want me to do japa, I will do it. If you tell me not to, I won't.

After I left Munger in 1989, when I was in seclusion in Trayambakeshwar, near Nasik, I heard God's command and was shown this place very clearly. I came here and started following His instructions. Strangely enough, even though this place is so close to Munger, I had never thought of staying here. I had thought of going either to Mt Abu in Rajasthan, where Shankara meditated, or to Rishikesh, my guru's place, or to Gangotri, the source of the Ganga in the Himalayas. He showed me this place. He told me to come here. He told me to do panchagni, the sacrifice of the five fires, and at the end He said, "Love your neighbours as I have loved you, provide them with the same facilities which I have provided for you."

Now, should I still stick to my old anxiety or should I give it up and follow God? What should I do? Should I proceed according to my old thoughts and ideas, should I practise japa and dhyana for the attainment of moksha or kaivalyapada, or should I obey the command of God? I am just a servant and a servant has no choice. Only the master has a choice. A servant has no choice. There is a poem by Rabindranath Tagore:

*O worshipper,
Put aside singing the name,
Leave worship, artifice and prayer.
Why are you sitting in a corner,
Closing the doors of the temple,
Hiding in the darkness of your mind?
In what kind of worship are you engaged?
Open your eyes and see,
Your deity is not in the temple.
His abode has shifted to that place
Where the farmer is ploughing the field,
Turning the hard soil, making it soft,
Where the labourer is making a road
After breaking the stone with great toil.
Scorched by sun or drenched by rain,
In summer and rainy season alike,
Their hands are smeared with soil.
If you go to them, leave your beautiful dress
And go walking along the dirt path.
Your deity is not in the temple.*

When the girls go to the home of their in-laws at the time of marriage, we give them a beautiful Bangalore sari with a mangalasutra, the symbol of marriage, gold earrings and even diamonds. I don't have these things; He gives them. I feel very happy doing this because it is God's command. If there is no command from Him, nothing will come. Without His command, nothing is done. Now, Prasad Kutir is full. People have given so many things that there is no place to

keep them. We constructed a three-storey building and a big store, and both are full. The Akhara, my place of worship, is also full. Yet daily things are being given in abundance: blankets, clothes and shoes.

The village people are suffering from tuberculosis. A doctor has come from Bhagalpur and another from Australia. It is God's command and it is also one of the Ten Commandments: Love thy neighbours and help them. So, if Christ is the son of God, I am the servant of God. In the *Srimad Bhagavata*, Sri Mukhunda says:

*I do not want any boon except to serve His feet.
He is the One who can bestow even liberation.
How can a noble-minded person be so foolish
As to beg a boon from Him for mundane desires?*

Why are there so few mystics and saints? What is their mission?

Mystics and saints are the salt of the earth. They are the connecting link. A mala has twenty-seven beads, but if there is no thread connecting them, all the beads will be dispersed. Mystics and saints bind the universe in one single chain. Mystics do not work on the external arena; they work on what we call the esoteric field, the inner field. They are not few in number. They have been keeping quiet, because in the last one hundred and fifty years, mankind has become materialistic. People want to enjoy the sensual life, the material life.

Saints and mystics have allowed them to undergo that experience because they know the outcome will be vairagya, distaste. If you overeat, you will develop a distaste for food. If you eat with control, it is all right. If you enjoy sensual life in controlled doses, it is all right. But if you go into sensual life headlong, up to the neck, then distaste will develop. When this distaste grows, then people will once again go in search of saints and mystics. The coming century is going to talk about it.

The twentieth century was the century of political culture. Politicians were at the forefront of every matter.

Even if a church was built, politicians were at the forefront. Now people have understood that the political culture will never save humanity, it will never solve social problems, it will never bring an end to war. Has it brought an end to any war? Two wars have been fought in this century, and we are preparing for the third.

In the next century the scientists will change their focus. They have been working on the dimension of matter and have developed the technology to prove their hypotheses. In the next century, they will work on feeling, emotion, devotion and bhakti. All the research will be streamlined. It has already started to happen in many countries. What is bhakti? What are the effects of bhakti on the electromagnetic waves of the human brain? How does bhakti influence the enzymes? How does bhakti improve or bring deterioration in the cardiovascular system?

Scientists are going to do research work in these areas. It was the scientists who proved the superiority of matter. Now they will prove the superiority of mind and emotions over matter. The next century will see this. There are many things which this century has missed that the next century will pick up. If the next century misses them, then disaster will follow because man has become very powerful. He has so much technological knowledge that he has the power to destroy himself. Then there will be more saints and more mystics.

There is another thing that often comes to my mind. There is only one path; all other paths are stepping stones. Karma yoga, raja yoga and jnana yoga are stepping stones. Bhakti is the path, God is the destiny, and you and I are the travellers. This is the only truth. If there is any philosophy other than this, it is illogical. We are born with only one destiny. Man is an experiment. The outcome of that experiment is the experience of God. Many people in the past have had that experience, but many more will have it later on.

I can see clearly the great changes taking place in different parts of the world, particularly in the western hemisphere. Wherever there is an excess of worldly pleasure

and materialistic aspirations, people have developed a feeling of distaste. The twentieth century has only shown us a culture of indulgence and enjoyment, a utilitarian, consumer culture. This culture now plays a dominant role in literature, music, art and drama also. This century has given us no path advocating spirituality. Great people like Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ramtirtha and Ramakrishna Paramahansa have somehow kept it alive by injecting some inspiration into it. That is why it has survived the onslaught of stark materialism.

The next century is going to be the century of bhakti, of devotion. Scientists have now diverted their attention. Those who did research in the fields of science and technology, experimenting on super computers and super satellites, are now going to change their direction. Many of them came and spoke to me. They think that enough is enough. They find that most of the discoveries and inventions are being misused and are destroying the whole world. People are being misled and spoilt. Enjoyment is necessary, there is no doubt about it, but too much indulgence automatically generates distaste.

This century, which has been based on excessive consumerism and sensual enjoyment, is now coming to a close. The age of bhakti is dawning. Bhakti is a force. It will influence the civilization, culture and relationships of mankind. If you study history, you will find that there have been revolutions brought about to promote awareness of bhakti. These were the times when society was going through a transition period and a feeling of instability prevailed everywhere, like today. It happened in India as well as in Europe. Whenever a society passes through a transition period, it experiences a social vacuum, and people begin to reject it.

Do you accept what is happening in your society today? Do you accept the way people think, act and behave? Don't you criticize these things? What does all this mean? It means you are not satisfied with the existing state of society. When

a society becomes dissatisfied with its own state of affairs, that situation is known as a social vacuum. This has already happened in the western developed societies, but they fail to understand this. Therefore, they are turning towards spiritualism; they are adopting *bhakti marga*, the path that leads to God. This is the only way.

Bhakti is a good way of life, not only for the individual, but for society, the entire civilization. Imagine the family, father, mother and children, sitting together every evening with a harmonium, guitar or sitar, and singing ‘Sriman Narayana Narayana Narayana Om’, or any other bhajan, in any other language. This is a happy family. Then together they read some books on saints and mystics. This cheers people up and gives them a feeling of love, satisfaction, harmony and bliss.

The people in Deoghar have one great quality which deserves praise: a high regard for sadhus and sannyasins. They take a keen interest in satsang. This you will not find elsewhere. Even in places like Rishikesh and Haridwar, you will find a lot of disorder in this regard. Things have become topsy turvy there, but here it is not like that. Load-shedding or powercuts are common here. When the electricity fails, it is supplied from Patna and the Deoghar electrician sits in the Patna electric supply office to see that the power supply to this place is not disrupted. They know that satsang is going on here and they take great care of us. The business class cooperates fully with us. The owners of the different local hotels also cooperate with us. We don’t have any problems here.

When we were listening to you fifteen years ago, it seemed possible to follow the spiritual path without believing in God. Your teaching has changed a lot. Are the people who have not found their relationship with God hopeless?

No. Supposing a small child asks, “Mummy, what is the moon?” You don’t say, “The moon is a planet one hundred and eighty-six thousand miles away.” You give him some answer that he can understand. But when he is older, then

you tell him that the moon is a planet which broke away from the earth many millions of years ago; it contains these minerals and has this gravity, etc. But if you tell the child that when he is very small, then he won't understand. When I came to you, I spoke about yoga and not about God. But today I am talking to you about God, not about yoga, because you have grown up enough to understand it.

I first toured abroad in 1967, for five or six months. I read the whole situation. I saw the impact of the hippies in America, of the Beatles in London. I knew that something was brewing in the Eastern bloc. I went to Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, even to Russia. I knew things were going wrong, and that it was just a matter of time. I thought then that it was no use talking about God because they would reject me outright. I found yoga very acceptable, a sweet pill which people could understand and adopt.

There was nothing wrong in it, because in order to reach the first floor, you need a staircase. You have to climb up by some means. In the beginning, yoga is the best way to deal with the mind and body, to make the mind subtle, comprehensive and penetrating. Now you are in a better position to discover your relationship with God. If you still find it difficult, explore yourself further. Come tomorrow. I may be able to tell you something more. Who knows, I may even transform your heart.

Tomorrow is Gita Jayanti, the birthday of Gita. It is Ekadashi, the eleventh day of the lunar fortnight. Tulsidevi is going to her maternal home for one month. She will return on Makar Samkranti and will stay here for another year. Today we are making all the preparations for her departure. During her absence, we lose interest in food; we just eat anything. Everybody feels dull, as if our daughter has left us. Therefore, from today our eating habits have changed totally. Everything will go back to normal when she returns in one month.

This is the month of Marga Sheersha, the best of all the months. It is in this month that the marriage and departure of Tulsiji is celebrated. When she returns on the day of

Makar Samkranti she will be properly installed and worshipped throughout the year, according to the set rules and regulations. This is a very good way of observing Bhagavan or Bhagavati directly, in their manifest form. Is God formless? No. All forms are forms of God. God is not formless. You can experience Him in any form. He may be in the form of the naughty Sri Krishna, in the form of Lord Rama, a goddess or even a prostitute. Manu and Satarupa told the Lord that they wanted a son like Him:

*Jewel amongst benefactors and ocean of compassion,
O Lord, I say truly that I want a son like you.
There is no way to hide anything before the Lord.*

Then the Lord Himself said:

*In the form of a human being of my choice,
I will manifest myself in your house.*

It all depends upon his wish. The great saint Eknath had His darshan in the form of a donkey. In fact, the Lord does not have a definite form. Vyasadeva says:

*O God! You do not have a definite form,
Therefore, we can worship You in any form.*

In the *Ramacharitamanas*, Lord Shiva says to Parvati:

*None know the beginning or the end of the Lord.
The Vedas have also confirmed this.
He walks without feet, hears without ears,
And performs all acts without hands.
He enjoys all tastes without a tongue
And is a great orator without speech.
He touches and feels all things without skin,
He sees without eyes and smells without a nose.
He performs many marvels for the sake of His devotees
And His glory cannot be described by any words.
He who is attributeless, formless, invisible and unborn,
Takes a form because of the love of His devotees.*

In fact, the most important things in the path of bhakti are faith and belief. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (12:2), the Lord himself says: “Those who, fixing their mind on Me, worship Me, ever steadfast and endowed with supreme faith, these I consider to be perfect in yoga.” Faith and belief, or faith and trust, are the basis of bhakti. They are also the basis of one’s life. Now, if somebody were to say that you have blind faith because you have accepted your father as your own father, without any proof, then you would regard that person as mad. Faith and belief are the foundation of our life, family, society, and also of bhakti. Even a great saint or intellectual devoid of inner trust and belief is a faithless person. In the *Ramacharitamanas*, Tulsidas prays to Lord Shiva and Parvati who constitute faith and belief:

*I bow down to Parvati and Shiva,
Who are embodiments of faith and trust.
Without them, even the adept cannot perceive God,
Although He dwells within all alike.*

A faithless person is like a beautiful woman adorned with ornaments but completely naked. Similarly, most intellectuals are rich in ornaments but naked otherwise. Previously I was also like them. Intellect is not the basis of life. Faith and belief are innate qualities in man. Without faith and belief, man would not survive even for a single day. Faith and belief provide an individual with an identity. Faith and belief are the basis of man. When a girl marries she goes to a strange house. She has to adapt and make it her own home because she has to live there for the rest of her life. While she stays there as a mistress, what is the basis of her strength and support other than faith and belief?

In fact, one cannot survive without faith and belief; they are man’s greatest qualities. If they are channelled properly towards God, life will be full of bliss and wonder, and the journey of life will be completed successfully. This is the best way. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna has declared: “Men devoid of faith in the dharma do not attain Me, O

Oppressor of foes, but return to the path of the mortal world.”

The other paths, such as jnana yoga, raja yoga, nada yoga, mantra yoga, kaivalya marga and so on, are all difficult to follow. You cannot practise nirvikalpa samadhi. If sannyasins cannot succeed on this path, then you will not be able to. You may concentrate the mind for a short period of time, but the concentration soon breaks. Bhakti can never break, it is a continuous process, like the Ganga which flows ceaselessly without a break. Yes, the path of bhakti is the easiest and most straightforward. In the *Ramacharitamanas*, Lord Rama says:

*The path of bhakti is easy and pleasant to follow,
The Puranas and Vedas declare this to be so.
The path of jnana is difficult and full of obstacles,
Formless meditation is hard to practise,
Because it offers no base for the mind to rest.*

Would you give some guidance on the education of children?

The two important things in the education of children are to teach them music and to let them play. It is not necessary to overburden them with too much bookish knowledge. Children only like music and playing. Therefore, teach them music and provide them with opportunities for games and sports. While playing and singing, they will learn everything else. Don't always try to find fault with the child. There is a big gap between the adult level of understanding and the child's. Usually there is a very big gap between the mental state of teachers and young school students. While teaching, one has to be mindful of this gap.

One has to come down to the level of the student in order to teach him. Children enjoy music and playing, making noise and getting up to mischief. What is wrong with that? A teacher should not always be saying, “Do this; don't do that.” A teacher should be neither a policeman nor

a hunter. Rather, he should be a loving companion, then he can become their teacher when the children are ten or twelve years old. Until the age of seven, forget that you have to teach them anything. There should be education through positive samskara. They should be allowed to grow and develop in a natural way: to sing, play, make noise and do mischief. There is nothing wrong with that.

Another important point to remember is not to tell the child what is right and wrong, good and bad. This distinction between right and wrong or good and bad is the complex of a guilty mind. Don't put this sense of guilt into the minds of children. When they grow up and become adults, they themselves will know the difference between right and wrong, good and bad. Even birds and animals know this. You should not tell them to read a lot, study hard or try to be great or important. Let them enjoy their schooling. They should feel that they have time to play, sing and make mischief. They should think that the teachers in the school are good, loving and friendly. This will generate a feeling of unity in their hearts.

There is a curriculum prepared for each class which has to be completed in one year. Whether or not it can be implemented is another question, but the aim is to complete the curriculum. We have all experienced that system. It is extremely monotonous, tiresome and full of drudgery. Many things that are taught are absolutely useless. Swami Niranjan did the right thing by not going to school. I always told him that I wasted many years on useless schooling, whereas he could save those years. Whatever I learned in school is of no use to me today, whether it was arithmetic, geography or anything else.

Geography keeps on changing. With the passage of time, ancient India has been divided into three independent countries: India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. How many states are there in India? What is the population? What are its climatic conditions? Such questions are irrelevant to children. These things should be taught after the matriculation stage; learning things off by heart without understanding

them is not good for children. Therefore, the entire education system should be changed. Who will bring about the change? I can't do it. You people have to do it. You should understand that today's educational system is inadequate for making an individual independent and self-sufficient.

Even a graduate cannot get a job today, let alone a matriculant! This situation should change. A matriculant should be able to earn his living, either by working in a hotel or by selling peanuts! Our educational system can produce only clerks; it is a thoroughly outdated system. But today, even the job of a clerk requires a lot of sophisticated training, knowledge of computers and modern office equipment. Therefore, certain fundamental changes have to be introduced in our educational system. The text books being used today are quite inadequate and much of their content is irrelevant. Education should become a tool to develop the human mind and brain.

What is needed today are modern techniques and knowledge with which to earn a living. For example, a farmer's children should be taught modern farming techniques. The children of a milkman, a carpenter or a weaver should be provided with technical knowledge and skills for dairying, carpentry and weaving, respectively. Such an approach would go a long way to solving the problem of unemployment. Today graduates are coming out of the universities in very large numbers, but most are unemployed.

Thinking people should try to reform the education system. Let there be a national debate on this issue. Children should be taught only what will be useful to them. A syllabus relevant to different aspects of life should be introduced only after the eighth standard. Up to this stage, education should be general, related to the development of the children's inner faculties. Only a few compulsory subjects should be taught up to this level. Thereafter specialization related to particular jobs and services can be introduced. We should try to learn from the Western education system.

There are many good examples right here. All the boys and girls coming to the ashram from the West are well versed

in skills such as carpentry, electrical wiring, gardening, driving, cooking, painting or construction work. Some are competent in more than one skill. It seems they learn these skills immediately after the end of their school education. We should copy them. We had a BSc graduate here who did not know how to open a bank account. This is what the education system had taught him! I had to send a swami to help him open an account at the bank and put his money into fixed deposit! Thus a sannyasin was providing practical guidance to a highly educated person.

There is a lack of practical education in India today. A movement needs to be launched to promote the vocational or job-oriented education which is non-existent today. This does not mean quarrelling or social unrest, but an open national debate on educational reform. The purpose of education today is quite clear: to earn a living. We have to educate students to become bread winners. Of what practical use is it to teach them about Akbar, Aurangzeb, Chandragupta and Ashoka? I learned so many useful things in my guru's ashram: typing, accounting, book keeping, translating, printing and every aspect of construction work. All these skills were of great use to me in my later life.

I also learned many other practical things from Swami Sivananda. He gave me one hundred percent perfect knowledge which proved to be most useful to me. Now I think that my first eighteen years of school education were useless and meaningless. The same is true for many people I see around me. Therefore, an open national debate should be conducted on this issue. The present system of education will create further problems in the country. I expressed my views quite frankly to the NCERT and other similar organizations, but the problem is, who will bell the cat?

Why do you have restricted areas here?

The other day I spent one full hour explaining to people the rules relating to the life of a paramahansa. Previously when people gave me money, I accepted it without comment. I

never rejected it. They would touch, wash and worship my feet, and also garland me. I never said no. However, even after I had explained for an hour that I have adopted the life of a paramahansa and all these things are not possible for me now, people still persisted with the same habit. So, I thought, it is impossible to straighten the tail of a dog. Therefore, bamboo bars were erected. Then we found some metal bars and replaced the bamboo bars with them. This was done to straighten the tails of these dogs. On their first day here they almost molested me.

You see, some sadhus and sannyasins feel pleasure in having their feet touched by devotees. Similarly, the devotees feel pleasure in touching the feet of sadhus and sanyasins, but this is not right. A sannyasin should not allow anyone to touch his feet, because it causes loss of power and energy. Moreover, any negative energy will pass on to the people touching his feet. Therefore, it is always safer not to touch anyone's feet. The Jagatgurus never allow anybody to touch their feet. This practice is against their rules and, therefore, it is not allowed. Of course, you may bow your head in respect and reverence.

Here in the Alakh Bara, you cannot express your reverence towards us nor do we deserve it. There is only one being who deserves it, and He is Narayana. He is the only one who should be worshipped by us. That is why we say *Namo Narayana*, Salutations to Narayana.

Satsang 35

14 December 1994

This world is not our permanent abode. It does not belong to us; it is an alien land. This is not the real home of the jivatma, the individual soul. Amir Khusaro used to sing:

*O bride,
You have lived long in your father's home,
Now come, your husband has called you.
You have been playing with your girl friends,
Now you have reached the end of your childhood.*

*After bathing, she was dressed and decorated.
All the relations came to take her to her husband's home.
Four bearers brought the palanquin to take her,
The priest and the barber also accompanied the party.*

*At last the bride took leave and none could check her.
Father, mother and brother continued gazing upon her,
Clad in fine cloth with kesar and marked with tilak.
Khusaro says that, when the bride proceeded
To her husband's home, none could accompany her.*

Yes, this is a foreign land. You are just a visitor here for sixty, seventy, eighty or ninety years. It is like going to a foreign country for some months or years. I came here on a visit in 1923. After completing my visit in this foreign land, I have to return to my original home. Our home is the

abode of God. I came to Rikhia on 23rd September 1989. Day and night were equal on that day. Of course, wherever I have lived has been full of blessings; no place has been inauspicious for me. That is proof of God's benign hand. I remember four places. The first is my ancestral home where I was born and brought up, the second is my guru's ashram in Rishikesh, the third is the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger and the fourth is this Alakh Bara in Rikhia. All four places have been auspicious, full of grace and revelation.

In all these places I received some spiritual experience. This is due to the grace of God; it has nothing to do with my luck, fate or fortune. What is fate? It is nothing. Have you seen a conch shell? It is the skeleton of an animal, but Brahmins blow it. Even the Vaishnavas blow it and feel dignified or glorious in doing so. The dignity or glory which is given to the conch shell is certainly due to the grace of God. Otherwise what would be the fate of that conch shell? It is just the skeleton of a conch. Therefore, one's own fate or luck is immaterial. Man's own fate is nothing but a mixture of pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow. Sumitra Nandan, a Hindi poet, has said:

*This life is a fountain
And spontaneity is its water.
It flows between the two banks
Of comfort and discomfort freely.*

Life is a combination of laughter and sorrow, birth and death. This is applicable to one and all. However, when God showers his grace, each and every place becomes auspicious. A poet has said:

*Life has brought me here and I followed it,
Death will take me away and I will follow it.
Neither have I come nor shall I leave at will.*

In 1945, I went to my guru's ashram in Rishikesh. My guru, Swami Sivananda Saraswati, was a highly qualified person, an MBBS. He was very simple, kind, and generous. People

would give him money, but there was no box, briefcase or money bag in which to keep it, so I kept it under the bed. Ananda Kutir where my guru lived had only four rooms. He was not rich. It was only much later that we became rich. But he was a very generous and large-hearted man. His heart was completely open, without any doors or windows. He was not at all interested in accumulating wealth. He would always insist on spending more than the actual income. He would say, "Spend more than you have. Feed the poor and give them medicine. Give blankets to the pilgrims. Make arrangements for drinking water during the summer, and extend all possible help to the sadhus and sannyasins."

In the ashram there was no dining room during the early days, just one small kitchen where we ate. We had to close the door while eating, otherwise monkeys would come and steal all the food. When the new ashram was constructed, a dining hall was also built. We used to sit in the dining hall in lines after the bell. Before eating, we would chant the fifteenth chapter of the Gita, the Ganga Stotram, sing kirtan and say, *Ganga Mata ki jaya*, "Victory to Mother Ganga". After some time, 'Ganga mata ki jaya' was sung for the second time, which meant, "Finish eating and leave". The moment the door of the dining hall was opened, the king monkey would go straight into the kitchen, take a lot of chapatis and quickly leave. Nobody could stop him by force.

Once we had no money at all. We had to go to other ashrams and institutions for lunch and, at the same time, work hard throughout the day at our own ashram. There was a time when there were no toilets in the ashram and we had to go out of the campus for this purpose. There were large, dangerous mosquitoes in the area and it was very difficult to relieve oneself comfortably in such a situation. Since then, I have always been apprehensive of mosquitoes. I can do without blankets, but not without a mosquito net. I used to ask for a mosquito net even in Denmark and Sweden. Once I was bitten by a scorpion. It was so painful that I could not help crying. Finally, Swamiji chanted a mantra and only then

did I feel relief. I was also bitten by a snake. Snake bite is not painful, but it can cause death.

That was ashram life, and in that life I had to do all sorts of work. As a result, I acquired a lot of self-confidence, which was God's grace for me. I never had any doubts about myself. I managed anything and everything without any interference, even the mosquitoes, scorpions, monkeys and thieves. Swamiji was a simple, devout, kind and compassionate man. He never cared for money, and I also acquired the same temperament. When I went abroad for the first time, I shared the same room as my host and did not ask him for any extra facilities. I have never asked anybody for money. I always thought that life is to be lived, to be enjoyed. It is bliss. The whole world belongs to me. It also means that I belong to the entire world.

I am speaking about these things especially for the sadhus and sannnyasins. When they go out, they often say, "Today I am going out. Prepare some special food for me so that I don't have any problems during the journey." This is not the right approach. In one of the scriptures it has also been said:

*One who lives on rough, dry alms once a day,
Who sleeps on the ground,
His family being only his body,
Whose dress is a rag made of worn out clothes,
Even then, if he cannot leave sensory enjoyment,
What a great misfortune!*

The life of a sannnyasin should be different to that of a householder. Although both eat, sleep and perform all the routine activities, there is a great difference between them. A sannnyasin has to perform certain duties and observe certain codes. He should be more humble than a blade of grass and more tolerant than a tree. He should return more respect for respect shown to him, more honour for honour shown to him. He should always pray to God, sing His praises and repeat His name unceasingly. Nowadays there

are many sannyasins who act as yoga teachers. People hold them in high regard and provide them with all the necessary facilities. Even then they complain and ask for this, that and the other thing.

Once one of my sannyasin disciples went to Bhopal to conduct a yoga camp. He was accommodated in a room without a fan and refused to stay in that room. I told him, "If you can't do without a fan, you do not deserve sannyasa life; you are only fit for household life. Go home, get married, and suffer the pains of worldly life." I kicked him out of the ashram. A sannyasin who cannot do without facilities and comforts does not deserve sannyasa life. I believe in the principle of survival of the fittest, although many undeserving people are also surviving today.

How does one perceive the voice of God? Does it come in words or images?

The voice of God is understood according to one's heightened awareness. It can be felt. It may come as an inspiration, in the form of symbols or in the language which one knows. It may come in writing, just as Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. When Moses liberated the Jews from Egypt, through his spiritual power they crossed the Red Sea and came to the foot of Mount Sinai. Then he climbed to the top of Mount Sinai where he got enlightenment. There he saw the light writing the Ten Commandments, as if a welding machine was illumining it. He saw the writing in Hebrew, not in Roman, because he knew Hebrew. A Hebrew's God knows Hebrew, an Anglo Saxon's God knows English, and my God knows English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Bengali and Tamil. He knows all the languages I know, but these languages are my limitations. Since these languages are my limitations, He instructs me within the confines of my limitations. However, God's voice is also beyond speech, in the form of symbols, geometrical forms, light, angels, devis and devatas. It comes in the form of flowers and the moon.

I never thought that I would leave India's shore because I used to live the life of a very ordinary mendicant. I used to beg with my piece of cloth and aluminium bowl in the streets of Varanasi, where the pilgrims come. If I got two or three rupees, I would eat in the evening. Sometimes I would get something, sometimes not. I liked that life of self-imposed poverty. Self-imposed poverty is a joy; God-imposed poverty is painful. That was the life I used to lead, so I had few fantasies, least of all to go abroad. But one day, a party in Bombay asked me to go to Saurashtra where there is a fertilizer factory. They were very hospitable and gave me every facility.

They brought me from Bombay in a four-seater private plane. I was sitting in the front seat beside the pilot. I asked him his name because I remembered him. I asked, "Did you have your flying lessons at Lucknow?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Do you remember such and such a person?" He said, "Yes, I remember him." I said, "Well, I am him. I was also a member of the flying club. I can fly helicopters and planes." He was there at that time, which was a coincidence. Then he said, "Well, take over the controls." I said, "My God! That was so many years ago and now you ask me to pilot the plane. No, I can't!" He just left the control panel and I got a shock. At that moment, I knew I was going abroad. I got a shock. For part of a moment, or even part of a part of a moment, I knew I was flying.

After that, I returned to Bombay, got my passport ready and within two days the chief minister wrote to me. I went to Munger, packed my suitcase and within five days I was out of India. I went to Singapore, Australia, the Philippines, Japan, Honolulu, America, London, France and finally Iran, where I was the royal guest of the Shah of Iran.

So, I hear His voice, but I don't know how to talk to Him. He knows my phone number, but I don't know His phone number! That's the problem. I searched for His phone number for many years, but after coming here I stopped searching for it. I said, "It's no use, He has no phone number."

Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the inspirer of Swami Vivekananda, could talk to Kali because he knew her phone number, and she would also talk to him. This was a very controversial subject, even during his period. Saints of many traditions have said that God is always talking to you, at every step of your life, but you are not able to hear His voice because the mind is very upset all the time. It is as if I am talking to you, but you can't hear me because a band is playing. So the first thing you have to do is stop the band. There are ten different instruments in this band, five *karmendriyas*, senses of action, and five *jnanendriyas*, senses of knowledge, and these make a lot of noise. You have to make them quiet, at least for a short period of time.

What is the best method to make them quiet? Different methods are necessary for different people. If the band is a nice party, just say to the leader, "Please keep quiet." He will tell the instruments to pipe down. But if the leader is a rascal and he says, "I don't care for you, so we will all make more noise," then you will have to beat him! So, it depends what kind of a band you have. Some minds are very congenial. You may say to the mind, "I want you to be quiet for fifteen minutes or half an hour so I can do a little japa." The congenial mind will cooperate with you, but sometimes the mind is rowdy. If you tell the rowdy mind to keep quiet, it makes more noise and disturbance. You may also have experienced that at times the mind is comparatively quiet. But the moment you take the mala in your hand, with eyes closed and asana set, the mind starts jumping up and down. That is the nature of the mind.

People have tried many forms of yoga, whether it is karma yoga, raja yoga, hatha yoga or kundalini yoga. They have succeeded in many cases, but in many cases they have also failed. But one yoga has succeeded in most cases and that is bhakti yoga, the path of devotion. It is a magical path. Go inside the room, sprinkle perfume, and all the players of the band and the band master fall asleep. You have your sandwiches and come out. That is the path

of bhakti, where the mind is pleasantly enticed to keep quiet. In bhakti you use clever tactics, not ordinary tactics. The tactics you use should depend on the nature of your mind. If you believe that God is in you, then this is the right method for you, so try it. If you believe that God is in heaven, then try that method. The practices used to quieten this turbulent mind should be according to your stage of evolution.

For over half a century I had been searching for the method and ultimately I found it here in Rikhia. I like to be the servant of God. It does not feel right when I think I am equal to Him. I believe that I and my father are one, Aham Brahmasmi, Shivoham, Soham, but I do not find that it works with me. It does not give me a pleasant feeling. But when I think I am the servant of God and He is my Master, it puts my mind at rest. What is the trouble? If I am the servant, everything is all right. If my mind is quiet, that's perfect. If my mind is frightened, that's perfect. If my mind has lots of passions, that's okay. I am the servant and He is the Master. He is tuning the song of passion, the song of life. He is tuning my radio, so I have passion, anger, lust and greed. So what? I am His servant! That idea puts my mind completely at rest, but it will not work in everybody's case. It has been said:

*One who has transcended good and evil,
Who is free from desire and craving,
He alone is beautiful, be he king or beggar.*

There was a great saint who always said, "God, I am crooked, wicked, lustful and ungrateful, but You are so good that You have considered me as Yours!" That is a relationship. There is another relationship where I am the car and you are the driver. A car has no intelligence, choice, plan or program. I am the medium and you are the operator. There are many such feelings which you can discover within yourself and, if it works, then the telephone line is connected and you can hear Him. Actually it is always connected because God is

constantly present in us. He is talking to us. He is solving every doubt, problem and difficulty. He is looking after us. Rabi Babu has said:

*He Himself has entered my house.
Spread a beautiful seat and sing in merriment for Him.
Remove the dust and filth from the house,
Decorate the flowerpots and fill them with water.
He lives in my house day and night,
In the morning His laughter fills the house;
The whole house is delighted by His smile.
He sits alone in my house even in my absence.
When I go out in the morning on my business,
He comes to the door to bid me goodbye.
When I return home in the evening,
I find him still sitting alone in the house.
When I am asleep on my bed, forgetting everything,
He alone remains awake in my house.
At that time His light is not visible on the earth,
That light burns all night under His apron.
Sometimes in slumber and sometimes in dream,
He comes and goes and keeps on laughing,
Even in the darkness of my house.*

Will the band always play in us?

This is the eternal band improvised by Maya and Company. Maya has partners; Avidya is the Secretary and Mr Ignorance is the Secretary General. That band will not stop because it is another side of creation, another side of the universe. If you ask, “Why is there maya, avidya and ignorance?” I won’t be able to reply to your question. I do not know the cause or the purpose. I have tried to find out through reading books on Vedic Dharma, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism and modern science. I did not find the answer and finally I came to the conclusion that there is no answer. It is a transcendental question for which there is no answer.

I think that God has given me everything already and is not going to answer anything I ask Him because He has given me the answer already. I know I have to find a solution inside myself for everything, and more than loving him, I try all the time to be very grateful. I find that this makes things much easier.

Certainly, that is the path for you. Each individual has a path according to his evolution, capacity and ability. If a child wants to climb the fence, he will need the help of his mother, but if an adult wants to climb, he won't need the help of his mother. In the same way, you have your path with God and I have mine. If I take your path, I am likely to have difficulties. But I do not question your belief; I think you are right. God has given us everything. There is nothing which He has not given. He has provided me with everything, more than I deserve. I did not deserve His grace, but He gave it to me. I did not deserve such good health, but He gave it to me. He has given me everything, whether material, spiritual or anything else.

So, I have to find my path, and that is what I was doing for more than half a century. Ultimately I have found that I am His servant; I am a tool in His hands. He can ask me to do anything. A knife can be used for an operation, for cutting or chopping vegetables, and for slicing off the head. Let Him do whatever He likes. Sant Namadeoji says:

*The name is Rama and Rama is Name.
You are the Master and I am the servant,
Hari is the ocean and we are the waves.
Where can the servant go, leaving the Master?
Hari is the tree which shades birds like us;
The servant loses himself by remembering Hari.
Saint Namadev says he obtained Hari by this method.
Rama pervades the universe, He is everywhere.*

What is satchidananda and how does one obtain it?

Sat-chit-ananda are three words, not one, and these three words are the attributes of God. Somebody said God is very

kind, another said He is compassionate, another said He is very loving, so these are the attributes of God. *Sat* means 'existence', 'truth'. You see existence all around you: in the wind, trees, sky, stars, planets, in the whole universe, solar system, galaxies and Milky Way. *Chit* means 'awareness' or 'consciousness'. God is not a sleeping reality. His consciousness is in everything. The tree is conscious, so it is growing. The rock has consciousness, so it is changing. I have consciousness, so I know. Everything in the universe has consciousness. That is called *chit*. The third aspect is *ananda*, which means 'total bliss'. God is total bliss, not half. Every grain of God is blissful. Just as every drop of champagne is intoxicating and every drop of the sea is salty, in the same way, every part of God is blissful.

Therefore, these three attributes are the basic attributes of God, *sat-chit-ananda*, and when they are put together they become *satchidananda*. There is also a verse in the *Mahabharata* which states:

*We bow down to Lord Krishna,
Who embodies existence, consciousness and bliss,
Who causes the creation of the universe,
In order to destroy the three afflictions.*

Could you say something more about the conflict in Serbia and Yugoslavia?

In every political, social or religious system, there are two possibilities, either a break or continuity. If there is continuity in the political system, there is no vacuum. If there is a break, there is a vacuum. One political system goes and the next system comes. When there is no connection between them, this is called a break. It often happens in political, religious and social systems, and it can happen in the family also. In socialist countries there has been a break, not a continuity, and that is why there is unrest. To move from one political state to another is a matter of transition, and it is not easy for a country to

transit from one state to another without changing the mentality of thousands of people.

In India, we are all very careful about this, because in history we have seen breaks also. In our religious system we never want a break. If Christianity comes, we pick up a few things from them, so there's no problem. If we celebrate Christmas, what harm is there? In kirtan we can sing, 'Hail Mary, Lord Jesus' like 'Hare Rama, Hare Krishna'. If Islam comes, we can follow that. We do not break our social system, rather we add to that system so that there will be no vacuum. Many religious, political and social systems have gone into this vacuum. The communist countries are now undergoing that state of political, religious and social vacuum. You have to think about what I am saying and whether it is right or wrong.

The most important thing, and this is the wisdom of India not the West, is that your family system has to be healthy. The husband and wife must live together properly and the children must live within limits. Your children are free, but they must know that you are their father or mother. Social and family obligations have to be looked at very systematically. This mala has twenty-seven beads, and if the thread breaks, all the beads will fall. In the same way, the communists are falling because there is no thread binding them. The thread which binds is the family. All of you should remember this because you are going into the twenty-first century. Do not be misguided. Husband and wife are the nucleus of the family system.

You have to learn this wisdom from India, in addition to yoga. Just as yoga is the wisdom of India, so also is the family system. You will not learn this in Bombay, Poona or even in Rishikesh. You will learn it from the villagers. Ordinary villagers are very humble. Their family system is so strong that even if the government of India fails, India will not fail! The government of India has failed many times, during the period of Ashoka, the Moghul period and the British period, but India has not fallen. In India, gurus are responsible for

this. Every family has a spiritual advisor who tells them what they should and should not do in different situations.

We have to tell the truth. I am not the advocate of the modern, industrial West or of socialism and communism. I am the advocate of a good, well-knit family and a peaceful country, where there are no internal wars and where a brother does not kill a brother. The Bosnian Muslims and the Bosnian Serbs are of one blood. The religion is different, but the blood is the same. Their forefathers had only one genetic code. They have two religious codes, but one genetic code. Therefore, what is the genetic code now? They have become aware of the religious code and some industrial countries are making use of the foolishness of these people by selling them arms. If I become foolish, if my family becomes foolish, if my community becomes foolish, anybody can use us.

Yesterday you told me that you would operate on my heart, so when can I have my heart operation?

Don't worry. When the operation is done, the patient does not know that he has been operated on. He is anaesthetized. Just forget it because the operation will not be done when you are aware. But I saw an operation in Hong Kong where the patient was aware. She was operated on for appendicitis, without ether or chloroform. She was just watching and smiling. There was no pain. She was desensitized by acupuncture and as soon as the operation was over they gave her sandwiches. On the operation table I saw that an operation can be performed while the patient is in his senses, but otherwise in all operations the patient has to be out of his senses.

What is Ishk hakiki?

According to Sufism, love is of two kinds. *Ishk* means 'love'. One may be in love with anybody or anything: the moon, vegetation, animals, human beings, music, flowers, pilgrimage places, saints and sages, or children. So the sufis categorized love into two kinds. One is *ishk hakiki*, meaning

‘love with truth’. The word *hak* means ‘truth’. In the Persian language *satya*, truth, is called *hak*. The second kind of love is *ishk mizazi*. The word *mizazi* means ‘worldly’. Thus *ishk mizazi* is the love for things and beings belonging to this material world.

Ishk hakiki is love for the eternal truth. Truth is defined as everlasting and eternal. Things that come and go are worldly. *Ishk mizazi* is love for worldly things like flowers, music, dance, literature, human beings and children, which come and go, are born and also die. Today you love them and tomorrow they may no longer even exist. Love for such things cannot be called everlasting or eternal. Love for all the divine things, like God, *satsang*, the scriptures or humanity, differs from love for worldly things. Some people find great joy in reading the *Ramayana*, performing *pooja* or visiting pilgrimage places. In *ishk hakiki* a person may undergo a lot of suffering, but still feel happy.

Do you know the story of Sita? She was brought up in an atmosphere of enormous prosperity, love and comfort. Her feet were so tender because she had never placed them on the ground. In the *Ramacharitamanas* Sita has been described as follows:

*Leaving the back of the bed, lap or swing,
Sita has never put her foot on the hard earth.*

But she loved her husband, Lord Rama, so intensely that she preferred to go with him to the forest with bare feet, rather than remain in the palace, enjoying royal comfort. This is called *ishk hakiki*. If you try to walk on the road with bare feet for a few miles, you will get blisters, because there is no love in your heart and no motivation to walk. Sita walked with and for Rama, her husband, whom she loved from the depths of her heart. In the *Ramacharitamanas*, again it has been said:

*Rama walked in front and Lakshman followed,
Both wearing the dress of an ascetic.*

*In between Sita appeared to move gracefully,
As Maya lies between Brahma and Jiva.
Sita stepped in between the footprints of Lord Rama,
And walked the distance as if unafraid.
Lakshman stepped right or left of them,
Being attentive not to place his feet
On the footprints of either Sita or Rama.*

Love for God is called divine love in English or ishk hakiki in Persian, or bhakti in Sanskrit.

Can bad karmas be transformed or converted into good?

Karma is not convertible, just as the rupee was not convertible previously. If one required dollars, then one could purchase them only on the black market. Now perhaps, the rupee is convertible and one can buy a limited amount of foreign exchange through the bank. First make your karmas convertible, then they can be invested in pooja, worship. For this conversion to take place, the value of both should be the same, but that is not the case. Just by thinking that whatever you do becomes your pooja, does not mean it will become pooja. To bring about a change, you need to involve your mind and emotions. To do that you need a system, just as when you exchange currency there is a process, a system, a mechanism that you should follow.

In the international market you need the exchange rate mechanism to change one currency into another. In the same way, there should be a mechanism in your mind, a way of thinking, which will totally change your perception and outlook towards life. How can you do that? By drinking alcohol and saying it is *somarasa*, a divine, intoxicating drink, or eating non-vegetarian food and saying it is *mahaprasad*? Vama Khepa used to drink, but he knew the mechanism. If everyone else starts drinking like him, without knowing the mechanism, then what happens? Black market! So, think it over and one day you will find an answer to it.

In the first stage of spiritual life, only the karma which is done selflessly, without any expectations, becomes convertible. In later stages, all the works you undertake become convertible. In the first stage, only the karma done without any expectation becomes pooja, just as all the karmas I performed at Rishikesh were done with *nishkama bhava*, an attitude of selflessness. It was all *seva*, service to God. I used to clean utensils and vessels, wash clothes, manage the hospital, drive a bullock cart, cut grass, feed the animals and milk the cow. I did not do it for myself and I never received any payment for it. I did not get any external benefit from it. It was *guru seva*. I believed that it was a disciple's duty to do the guru's work with an attitude of selflessness.

*In this, there is no loss of effort,
Nor is there any adverse effect.
The practice of even a little of this dharma
Protects one from great fear.*

All the religions, all the saints and wise ones have stressed this point again and again. Kabir Das has said:

*Kabir is the servant of saints,
He is the servant of their servants;
Kabir has become like grass under their feet.
There is no scarcity in the court of the Lord,
But the devotees are not able to enjoy it,
Because of defects in the services they render.*

In Rishikesh, most of my karmas were converted into pooja. The karmas which remained were my personal karmas, *sakama karmas*, done with a selfish attitude and with expectations. They were not converted into pooja. In the ashram there was hardly any time for personal work. I worked twenty-four hours a day. I was in charge of the ashram. We had a watchman and I had to wake up in the middle of the night to check that he was awake. The ashram was lacking in facilities and many people used to fall ill.

Once I got jaundice. My guru told me, “Don’t eat spicy food, just eat boiled vegetables and you will be all right in a few days.” I did become all right just in a few days. Once I got typhoid. That time I also recovered without any medical help. I was bitten by rats and by snakes, but there was no time to pamper the body and I was very thin. If you walk from the Ganga to Vishvanath temple, you will be tired. I had to cover that distance many times in a day and there were no steps at that time. I was young and I was born in a mountainous region; that helped me a lot. People from the mountains have very strong hearts because they have to go up and down the hills for every little thing. There are no plateaus to walk on in Rishikesh.

Whatever work I did there for my Gurudev became my pooja, my work. That helped me a lot later on. At that time I never thought that I would have my own ashram. It is only under a spell of bad luck that a sannyasin desires to have an ashram. An evolved sannyasin will never wish to have an ashram. Only a sannyasin in whom some householder samskaras remain will think of having an ashram. An ashram is a big headache with so many responsibilities. You have to feed all the disciples. When I started Sivananda Ashram, relatives from Kumaon Hills started coming and claiming their relationship with me, but I disowned them and made them leave the ashram at once. If you want to maintain a relationship with your family, then why wear this saffron robe? It is cheating.

*A sadhu is a friend to none,
He takes a puff and then he is off.*

Often we sing:

*I have neither death nor misfortune,
Neither have I father and mother, nor birth,
Neither relations nor friends, guru nor disciples.
I am the embodiment of consciousness and bliss,
I am Shiva and Shiva alone.*

So, guru seva is the convertible currency, and works carried out with selfish purpose, for our own benefit, are non-convertible currency. However, in this world all the karmas cannot be done without any desire for fruits. Selfish desires to reap some fruits always creep in. It is inevitable. I am telling you the facts. I am not talking about the principle or the ideal situation. If you enter a coal mine or a chamber full of soot, you are bound to get black stains. This world is a chamber of soot. You are bound to get black stains of selfish desires.

Therefore, serve the poor and suffering and motivate others to do the same. This is also a convertible currency. Then seventy-five percent of your karmas will become pooja. The remaining twenty-five percent you can leave to God. Then your karmas will be seventy-five percent pure and only twenty-five percent will be adulterated. Even a twenty-four carat gold coin contains some copper. Without that no ornament can be made. Let this twenty-five percent adulteration remain, because without it you and your family cannot survive. Thus the ratio should be fifty percent guru seva, twenty-five percent service to the poor and down-trodden, and the remaining twenty-five percent for the welfare of your family. Then your karmas will be transformed into pooja or worship. This I am telling each one of you.

Satsang 36

15 December 1994

Kirtan has purified the entire atmosphere. When I listen to kirtan, of course, it brings me very far in spiritual life, but at the same time a vision comes to my mind. I think the next century will be the century of kirtan. The yoga of kirtan is the same name which we were singing just now. If you sang one kirtan slowly and spontaneously, for a minimum period of two hours, or even longer, gradually increasing the rhythm, you would reach a deep state of awareness, a state of bhakti.

To attain this would one need to control the mind?

Yes. Just as an animal trainer tames a tiger or a snake-charmer tames a serpent, in the same way, the name of God, the chanting of mantra, must be done properly in a large group, with *tala*, timing. Tala, timing, is an attribute of the mind. By following the tala, the mind goes deep without any effort from your side. In the *Srimad Bhagavata* it has been said by Narada:

*This is my experience,
That for those whose minds are restless
From the desire for sensual enjoyment,
The singing of the sportive acts of the Lord
Is the ship to cross the ocean of the world.*

It is not possible to experience this deep state now. Everybody has something in his mind. However, if this two hours were dedicated only to the singing of 'Hare Rama, Hare Rama' and if everybody closed their eyes, the rhythm would start and gradually the vibrational frequencies would rise. The higher the velocity, the lower the frequency, and the higher the frequency, the lower the velocity. This is the relationship between velocity and frequency. It is a scientific law. Velocity pertains to the mind. The mind is very active. It has speed, so it has velocity. The mind must lose its velocity and attain frequency. When the mind attains frequency, then many minds become one mind.

This is possible through kirtan. For the last few years I have not been listening to kirtans, because nobody came here. I was the lone emperor. I used to sing to myself because I know how to sing, but that was not kirtan. Kirtan is the chanting of God's name in groups for a prolonged period of time, one, two, three or four hours. When the mind becomes one with the nada, the sound and the mantra, there is no difference between the mind and the mantra. Then the place where the kirtan is sung becomes sanctified and purified. This time, when all of you came here, we have had kirtan right from the beginning. We are very happy that this place has become sanctified by the chanting of kirtan. In the *Srimad Bhagavata* the Lord Himself says:

*Until the whole body rejoices,
The mind is overcome with ecstasy,
The eyes overflow with tears of joy,
The inner and outer self is flooded with love,
There is no possibility of purifying the heart.*

*The purer our heart becomes,
By hearing the sportive acts of the Lord,
The power of experiencing subtleness
Also increases in the same proportion,
Just as with the use of collyrium,
The eyes are able to see more clearly.*

I think that as you have taken an interest in yoga, you will also take an interest in kirtan. It is my dream. In this Kali yuga, in this age, kirtan is as good as medicine. In the *Ramacharitamanas*, it has been said:

*In Kali yuga the name of Rama
Is the bestower of all desired objects.
It is the benefactor in the next world,
And like father and mother in this world.
Karma, bhakti and discretion are useless.
The only dependable means is the name of Rama.
There is no other way to salvation,
Except the name of Hari in Kali yuga.*

In our scriptures it is said that the chanting of kirtan is the best means to ward off enemies. Lack of peace, restlessness of mind, is the greatest enemy of man. If the mind becomes quiet, the impossible becomes possible. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (12:8) the Lord says to Arjuna: “Fix your mind on Me alone; let your thoughts dwell on Me. You will hereafter live in Me alone. About this, there is no doubt.”

Would you please tell us something about the leper whom you served in Rishikesh?

Many years ago during a Kumbha Mela, a man suffering with leprosy was brought to the ashram in a gunny bag. Swami Sivananda called me and said, “Put him in a room and clean his body with the necessary antiseptics.” Swamiji was a doctor and he knew what to do. I also had a little knowledge about such matters. I am not a regular doctor, but I know as much as a regular doctor. So I carried out the duty I had been given. That man was obnoxious; his smell, his attitude, his behaviour, his entire being was something which I could not accept.

The next morning when I gave Swamiji a report, he asked me how the man was. I said, “Swamiji, that man is so difficult, his disease, his sores are so difficult.” Swamiji replied, “You want to find God without any effort. You want to realize God without a change of heart, mind, philosophy,

and concept, without destroying your personal nest. You have a personality, character, views, habits, likes and dislikes. Destroy them first and change your heart." If it had been a beautiful young lady, I would have served her without complaining. Even if it had been a young man, a beautiful or rich man, I would have served him. Such a man was I. Do you think I was fit to realize God? No, I was unfit.

On the day I heard the command, "Love thy neighbours. Help them as I have helped you," that scene, and what Swamiji had told me, came into my mind. "You want to realize God without changing yourself. You want to see the light without operating upon your own cataract. No, it is not possible." At that time, another realization dawned also. For many years I had been searching for the answer to a question. I pray to God and repeat His name; everybody does it. I like to remember Him, like everybody else, but do I love Him? Now the problem comes. How do I love Him?

You love someone with whom you have a relationship, but I have no relationship with God. The only relationship I can have is that He is God and I am a man. No, that is not a proper relationship. The relationship became very clear here in Rikhia: "I am Your servant and You are my Master. I am ready at your beck and call. Hereafter, I will live as you ask me to live. For that, you will have to tell me what to do, because I am not an intelligent servant, I am a third rate servant who has never learned the art of service." Ever since then whatever I do, I do not with the idea of achieving realization, salvation, moksha, emancipation, kaivalya, or nirvikalpa samadhi. No, I am doing it because He asked me to. In the *Srimad Bhagavata*, Prahlada says to the Lord:

*I am your selfless servant,
And you are my absolute Master.
Our relation is not unlike that of
A servant of a king and the king himself.
O best amongst those who bestow favour,
If You would grant a desired boon to me,*

*Grant that the seed of a desire
Should not germinate in me at any time.
Because with the advent of desire,
The body, mind, senses, prana,
Patience, shame, intelligence,
Dharma, brilliance, memory and truth,
All are destroyed without doubt.*

In Trayambakeshwar, on 14th July 1989, He told me what to do. On 8th September 1989, He told me where to live. It was clear and I am doing that. Now that I have decided I am His servant, I will do what He says. If He tells me, “Satyananda, leave your mala, leave this place, drive a tractor and plough everybody’s fields; help all the people,” I will do it. I am not too old for that. I am a young man. My hair does not tell my age. It is my strength which tells my age. I get up at midnight. I sleep for four hours, sometimes three. If Bholenath does not disturb me, I can sit for twelve hours without moving my body. But generally Bholenath does not allow me to sit for that long; he says it is wrong. After three hours he comes and licks me and makes me run after him. At midnight he comes and wakes me up. So, I have composed a song for him:

*I was sleeping, I was sleeping,
There came Bhole and said,
Bho – Bho – Bho –
Get up, Get up, Get up,
I was sleeping, I was sleeping.*

A devotee has said:

*If you yourself had not come to us,
How could we have touched your feet?
Had you not raised us like this,
We could have separated from your caravan.
Had you not drawn our boat from the mid-stream,
We would have remained in this ocean whirlpool.*

Bhole's birthday is on the 20th December. He is a Sagittarian and so am I. I am a Dhanurasi. He understands only one thing and I also understand only one thing. He has only one owner; I also have only one owner – the Lord. So, there are many other forms of relationship with God, but this relationship has been revealed to me. It is a very relaxing relationship. I have no more anxieties: "God when will I reach You? Now I am getting old. Will I die without seeing You?" All that is over. I do not care whether He comes or not. When I began to think in this way, then I felt something in my life change.

Last year there was a convention in Munger. I had not given any hints, but the people who came here left clothes, blankets and many other things. When they left, I did not know what to do. Somebody from Delhi sent his company truck. So I said, "Satsangi, consult the head of the village, get a list of the people and distribute the clothes and blankets as quickly as possible because I have no place to keep them." So, in this way, things have been changing and this change was not created by me. This change was His wish, His will.

Today the leaders in many countries have disappointed us, so we cannot place our trust in them anymore. They talk a lot, but they do nothing. However, there is one type of person who can do something – those people who are dedicated to spiritual life, who run after God, who think God is their life, who are spiritually minded and go into the inner field. It is these people who must come to serve the forms of God. All the people around you who are suffering, who are unhappy, who are naked, who are floundering in the darkness, are all the different forms of God. You cannot ignore that form of God, which is immanent, which is all pervading. You cannot just go running after the transcendental God.

God has two forms, transcendental and immanent. The immanent form is everywhere, in everything. If you serve a tree, you are serving God. If you serve the land, you are

serving God. If you purify the river, you are serving God. If you purify the atmosphere, you are serving God. If you help the needy, you are serving God. Then we have the transcendental God also in Hare Rama, Hare Rama. I do not object to that, but the realization of God must become a total experience, not partial.

In the *Bhagavad Gita* (11:5–7), while showing Arjuna His universal form, the Lord said: “Behold, O Arjuna, all the forms of Mine by the hundreds and thousands, of different sorts, divine and of various colours and shapes. Behold the Adityas, the Vasus, the Rudras, the two Ashvins and also the Maruts; behold many wonders never seen before, O Arjuna. Now behold in My body, the whole universe centred in one, including the moving and the unmoving and whatever else you desire to see.”

Are the living beings in this world different from paramatma, the transcendental God?

They are all part of God, part of the one form in which God has manifested Himself. The happy ones, the unhappy ones, the trees, the animals, all are a part of Him. If you want to realize God, then try to know, not only the transcendental God, but also the God who lives in each and every living being, and also in non-living things. Only then can you know Him fully. Just knowing a part of Him is not enough. You should know Him in totality and in all His forms. Your inner awakening can really take place someday. God is always with you. Nothing is difficult for Him, only He should be convinced that you are totally honest in whatever you are thinking and doing.

A sadhu, a sevak, a sage, a householder who has wealth, all have to be honest. One can earn money with honesty. What difference does it make? There is nothing wrong in earning money provided it comes through honest means, but one must return it to society. The ocean collects water from all the rivers, but it returns that water to the earth eventually. What would happen if it did not? So, nobody is

prohibiting the earning of money, but it must be returned to society. If it is not returned, then industry, business, shops would all collapse. All the resources would dry up. By helping the needy, we help ourselves; it is beneficial to us. In the *Srimad Bhagavata* it has been said:

*In earning wealth, in increasing it,
In maintaining and expending it,
In its use and destruction,
Everywhere one has to face
Fear, anxiety, illusion and shrewdness.*

In the *Srimad Bhagavata*, Shukracharya also says:

*One who divides his income in five parts,
One part for dharma, for fame, for further increase,
For self-enjoyment and for dependants,
Remains pleased in this world and the next.*

Yogishwara Chamas also says:

*The outcome of wealth is only dharma,
Because from dharma, arise jnana and vijnana,
And thereafter follows perfect peace.
But it is regrettable that such wealth is spent
In household affairs and enjoyments only.
We do not see that this body is overtaken by death,
Which cannot be avoided by anyone in any case.*

This is the most important thing: when you help others, you are helping yourself. Bhartihari says:

*O King, if you want to milk this earth-cow,
Then rear and nourish your subjects like her calf,
By nourishing them properly and continuously,
The earth bears fruit like the wish-fulfilling tree.*

In a country where the society and its people have a tendency to help others, there are no social problems. This country is happy because of its philosophy of helping others.

In the *Ramacharitamanas* it has been said:

*There is no dharma superior to doing good to others,
And no meanness inferior to troubling others.*

It is my philosophy to help you. If everybody were trying to help others, there would be no problems in society. Helping others has been the greatest philosophy of our society. Bharti hari has said:

*The branches of trees bend low
With the load of fruits they bear.
The clouds rising up in the sky
Also come down with the weight of water.
Good persons remain gentle and humble,
Even when they become affluent;
Such is the nature of benevolent beings.*

It has also been said:

*Without prayer, the sun makes the lotus bloom,
The moon too causes the lily to open,
The clouds also release water unprayed for.
Saints do good to others in the same manner.*

When you help others, you are helping yourself. Do not think about yourself so much. You think too much about yourself, your children, your husband, your boyfriend. Think about them a little bit. A little bit is necessary, but not too much. You are overanxious about your children, but you are not overanxious about my children. You feel so concerned about your children, but you do not think about the children of others. You should be equally concerned about the children of others. You should think about yourself and others alike. The society which is taking care of others is a secure society. If you live in a society where people are always concerned about each other, you will feel very secure. If you want to change society, this is the ultimate philosophy.

Satsang 37

16 December 1994

There are more than forty-five species of Australian eucalyptus trees. The trees growing here belong to one of them. After four years I will cut them down to about one metre, then we will have another crop. In this way, I can get four crops from this tree. I can go on cutting and harvesting this Australian species. When they become too thick I cut them back and give them to my neighbours for building their houses. I have planted about five to six hundred trees to begin with and I have already given away about half the wood.

The purpose of this establishment is not to teach yoga, nor to give mantra or other initiations. Everything here is for my neighbours – the wood, grass, fruits, water, seeds, tractors, trucks, bricks, fertilizer, cow dung, cows, cycles, underwear and saris – nothing is mine. This place does not even give blessings. I believe that only God can give blessings, nobody else. A human being can only give good wishes. I too can only give my good wishes. I may wish you a Happy Christmas or a Happy Diwali, but blessings can come only from God. In the *Srimad Bhagavata*, Akrura has said:

*To the Lord, none is dear or disagreeable,
He is neither friendly nor hostile to anybody,
Nor is anybody ever neglected by Him in any way.*

*Even then, whoever remembers Him in whatever way,
He also remembers Him in the same way
As the wish-fulfilling tree gives desired objects
To whoever happens to sit beneath it.*

This place was shown to me by Lord Mrityunjaya Mahadev on 8th September 1989 at about four a.m. on his television screen. I saw it and immediately informed Swami Niranjana, giving him a detailed description. He made enquiries and bought it within three days. I had visualized it on the 8th of September and on the 12th the title deed was in our hands. Now I do not want to meet anyone. If you want to learn yoga, go to Munger. If you want to have satsang and discussion, if you want to learn yoga or Vedanta, sing kirtan and bhajan, then Munger is the best place. I have left all these behind and come here. I do not want you to come here again and again, expecting to have kirtan and satsang and so on. I am telling you that I definitely do not want such things here.

*I have come hither to dive deep into the river of love,
On the other hand the world is calling me,
Quite perplexed from the shore.*

If you want such enjoyments then go to Munger. I have left behind a part of myself in Munger, my successor. I hope you understand what I mean.

Since settling here, I do only one thing. Whatever you people give me, I distribute. Whatever you give me, you give me for others. I am just a postman who delivers letters and money orders to the persons concerned. I am here to deliver God's money orders. That makes me feel very good. I feel so good that I have been employed by the paramatma, the great one, who is the creator of this world, controller of the cosmos and the father of all living beings. If you were given this service, would you do it? No, you would rather serve your family and look after your children. But I do not like the service of husband-wife. If I had wanted to do that, I would have done it a long time ago. If you have to serve

somebody, then choose a person who is very wealthy and powerful.

*When a rich man like Lord Rama stands by your side,
O servant, where does the question of scarcity arise?
The goddess of wealth and perfection incarnate
Are there to serve you, and salvation cannot desert you.*

My master is the owner, the creator, of this world. The person you are working for is only an owner of a factory, hotel, shop, a few acres of farmland or, at best, a few industries. But I am serving the master who is the richest in this world, the most powerful king of all. He is beyond comparison. Nobody can challenge him. You have to serve somebody, so choose a master who is a real magnate. The people you are all working for are not masters, they are servants themselves. They are only presenting themselves as masters. This is why Rasakhan has said:

*If I am reborn a human being,
I desire to live in Gokul,
The village of cowherders of Brijbhumi.
If I am born an animal, what shall I do,
But graze in Nanda's herd of cows?
If I become a stone, let it be from that hill,
Which Krishna raised as an umbrella,
Due to the wrath of God Indra.
If I am born as a bird, I would like to live
In the branches of the kadamba tree,
Standing on the shore of the Jamuna river.*

When the great yogi, Sri Aurobindo, broke out of the Alipore Jail, he first went to Chandanagar, a French territory, in order to escape from the British police. Later, he came here where his wife and family were staying. Sri Aurobindo was from Deoghar. He went underground and hid himself here before going to Pondicherry.

Sri Aurobindo mentioned the name Rikhia in his autobiography. The name of this place is Rikhia and the

name of the village is Pania Pagar. Actually the name Rikhia comes from the word 'rishi'. However, Sri Aurobindo lost the opportunity of having an ashram here because he was being chased by the British police. Otherwise, he would have stayed here because Pondicherry is by no means a place of pilgrimage. It is not an ancient place or a religious place. But he went there because it was a French pocket where he could hide from the British police and live peacefully.

This property was very big initially. The Tagore family had considered the possibility of starting Shantiniketan here, but it did not work out. In olden times many people wanted to open their institutes here in Deoghar. Deoghar has many very good institutes. Ramkrishna Mission has a big branch. The climate is also very good here. Calcutta is very humid and full of mosquitoes. You have to search for a mosquito here. The atmosphere is also very clean and dry. Not only the Alakh Bara but the entire area becomes quiet by six or seven p.m. You don't even hear the sound of crickets or grasshoppers, although sometimes around midnight you may hear the barking of dogs, which is common in villages.

At one time somebody wanted to start a stone crushing industry here. The people of this area opposed it vehemently and got a stay order. Ultimately the plan was dropped. Now the government of Bihar has passed an order that no industry can be started within a few kilometres of this place. The local people are making bricks on a large scale. All these sannyasins also make bricks. We get sand from the mining department, then we make houses for the needy. Today we have fired the third brick kiln. We do not need anything from outside.

The sooner these changes take place the better. You should see things from my point of view. You see them only from your point of view. The husband has his views, the wife has her views and the children have theirs. Nobody considers the viewpoint of others. I haven't said anything for five years and now, for the last one month, I have been saying the same

thing over and over again. But still the outcome is zero. Nobody listens to the truth.

When people are not prepared to listen, then why waste energy speaking? One hour a day of darshan, in fact, is sufficient, then people should depart. This is no place for satsang. I have not come here to give satsang. One cannot keep two swords in one case. If you try to do that, then the sword as well as the case will break. Similarly, if I want to follow my *antar atma*, my inner soul, to pursue a higher spiritual goal, and also remain in touch with you, then neither objective will be achieved. This is certain. Therefore, Farid has said:

*Search for the head of the village or for the Lord.
Do not try to stand in two boats at one time.
By doing so you will lose your original direction.*

Can you talk to us about faith and belief in God and how important it is for spiritual development.

Faith and belief are natural to everyone. One cannot live without them. Not only faith and belief in God but also faith in your own self, faith in your family, faith in your friends. That is so natural. Faith comes naturally to a child; you do not have to teach him faith. The child believes in his mother, he believes in friendship. There are two important things: one is the heart and the other is the head. Definitely God cannot be comprehended through the intellect. God is not a matter of intellect. Through the intellect you can understand, you can explain, but the intellect cannot perceive, it cannot experience.

Many years ago I was travelling in Europe. There was a gentleman also travelling with me. At dinner time an Indian sweet was served. He asked me what the name of the sweet was and I told him. He said, "Oh, so this is a rasagulla. I have written an essay on it." He had done research on Indian sweets at some university in England and had written an essay on rasagulla. Yet, when a rasagulla was on his table,

he did not know it was a rasagulla because he only had intellectual knowledge, not experience. I have never written an essay on rasagulla, but I definitely knew what it was because I had experienced it.

The heart gives you experience. The intellect can, at the most, give you knowledge. If you think that knowledge of God is enough, I say, “No, God is a matter of experience, and not only God, everything in life: sweets, colours, love, hatred. You can write page after page on love, but if you have never loved anybody, what do you know about it? Nothing at all. God has to become a living experience in man’s life, and that is possible only if he functions through his heart. The heart is the source of the various feelings like love, hatred, jealousy, fear, anxiety and many more. These feelings are nothing but experiences. You feel heat, pain, fear, love. You can perceive them and this cognition is real knowledge. So, through the heart you know exactly what everything is.

Now, you asked about spiritual life. God and spiritual life are not different; they are just two names for the same thing. You can call it spirit or God in English. You can say Atma or Paramatma in Sanskrit. You can say Dios in Spanish. Different names do not make God different. The object is the same. In Hindi we say sabun, in English they say soap, in Spanish they say jabon. Are they three or one? They are one. Only the names are different. So God, Atma, Paramatma, Self, Supreme Being and Almighty are all different names, but their essence is the same.

What you call God or spirit should be understood in two parts. I am using intellectual language now. Firstly, God is an all-pervading reality. The whole universe, not only this earth, but everything that is existing, is His expression, whether planets, sun, moon, galaxies or space. The entire existence in this universe is an expression, a manifestation of God. In philosophical terms that is called immanence. Secondly, God is transcendental, He is beyond everything. It has been said in the *Kathopanishad*:

*The light of the sun never reaches there,
Nor the light of the moon nor the stars,
Nor lightning and least of all fire.
When He shines, everything shines.*

God is existence and He is beyond existence. Now, this God, who is existence and beyond existence, also exists in me and in every being. Just like electricity exists in a light bulb, in a refrigerator, in a cooler, in a heater, likewise He exists in every one of us. In the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* it has been said:

*The Creator and All-pervading soul of the universe,
This Divine Being resides in the heart of all beings.
Those who meditate on Him with heart and mind
Merge themselves in Him and attain immortality.*

In the context of one's own self, He is known as spirit. Therefore, when you say spiritual life you mean the God in you. In philosophy they call it the individual soul, *jivatma*, spirit, *atma*, Self. These are some of the names given when the supreme being is individualized. When that transcendental being whom you call God is individualized, we call Him spirit. When the electric current is individualized in the light bulb, we call it electric light. When the supreme being is individualized, we call Him the individual soul. The supreme being is called God. In Sanskrit we call Him Ishwara. The Muslims call Him Allah, Khudah. The Jews call Him Jehovah. Names belong to a language, a country, a time, a philosophy. God has no name, yet, every name is His name. His name can be Satyananda, Jnanananda or Atmananda; you can give Him any name.

Now let me tell you something else. Frankly speaking, in this universe, nothing has a name. You have given it a name. Here are two simple examples. Take cotton. You make thread from cotton, then you make cloth, then a shirt, a jumper or whatever. Now, let me ask you, what is the form of cotton? Is thread the form of cotton? Is the piece of cloth the form

of cotton? Or is this shirt the form of cotton? No. Every one of these forms is the form of cotton. Cotton takes different shapes. Take a gold bangle. Is this bangle the form of gold? It is the form of gold, but it is not the basic form of gold. Therefore, you should always remember that name and form exist, but they are not the essential, basic, ultimate or absolute form. In the *Chandogya Upanishad* it has also been stated:

*O gentle soul, different vessels made of clay,
Having different names, are in fact clay.
Their nomenclature is simply another form of speech,
Only for the sake of convenience.*

Therefore, it is easy to understand that God has no form. Yet every form that we perceive, conceive, respect or worship is His form. It does not matter if I worship Rama and you worship Christ, Mohammed, or for that matter, even me! God takes infinite and finite forms. If God does not have infinite forms, He is not God. God is only infinite, he is not finite. Take the earth as a simple example. How many shapes, things, objects, items or forms can you make out of earth? Hundreds and thousands. One lump of earth can take hundreds and thousands of shapes or names, but basically it is earth. Why shouldn't we understand God in this manner? Why should I think that Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Christ or God are sitting somewhere?

I don't challenge that view. If you want to challenge that view you must give proof that He is not there. If you say that Rama is not in Deva loka, tell me how do you know that? If you say Shiva is not in Shiva loka, give me proof. If you say God is not in paradise, how do you know that? Because some intellectual told you? Because somebody in France, England, India or Russia wrote a book and you believed it? That is not proof. Do you believe everything that is written in books? No, books are not to be believed, they are to be read. One thousand million books may be there, but which books are to be believed? Every book says

something different and every man, every pen, every idea, every thinker, is different. There is not one thinker who will agree with another. The Vedas and shrutis say different things. Sages and saints do not agree on any one point. The essence of God is very secret. In the *Mahabharata*, Yudhishtira said to Yaksha:

*Reason has nothing to do with dharma,
The scriptures are also of diverse opinion.
There is not a single sage or rishi
Whose words can be taken for granted.
The secret of dharma is hidden in obscurity,
So the path great persons follow is preferable.*

In the *Bhagavad Gita* also the Lord says: “Whatever acts a great man does are observed by others. People follow the example he sets.” The essence of God is not easy to comprehend through books. Books should be read; I don’t deny or discourage it, but books alone cannot lead you to the ultimate truth. The way is within you because you are the nearest person to Him, and God is closest to you. He is so close to you, just turn your mind and you will see Him. About turn; not left or right turn or quick march, just about turn. A poet has said:

*The Lord is in the mirror of the heart,
One can see him whenever he bends his head.*

In order to change the mind, you have to turn everything about: all the concepts, behaviour, thinking, fears, psychoses, passions, affections, attachments, idiosyncrasies, silliness and rascality. We have to change everything that we are. In the *Ramacharitamanas*, God Himself says:

*I wash off the multitude of sins
Collected even in crores of births
As soon as a man appears before me.*

However, it is very difficult to change. Aspirants who take sannyasa only change their dress, nothing else changes.

Change is not easy. It is easy to change your name, religion, dress or country, but you cannot change yourself. It is the hardest thing that a man can do. The one who can do it is not a man, he is a junior God.

Now the question arises of God and spirit. God's presence within you is His spirit. Electricity is present in the electrical wires, but it is a part not the total voltage of electricity. I'll give you an example to help you understand that spirit can be evoked, aroused, awakened and manifested through a particular method. I have tried all methods, including tantra, but ultimately I have come to the last point of my spiritual life, not the last part of my life. Don't think I am going to die.

I have come to the conclusion that if you have faith, you have God in you. I can also assure you that everyone of you has faith. You are not bankrupt, you are very rich in faith. If I tell you that your faith is more powerful, effulgent and rich, than your intellect, you will not understand. So far as intellect is concerned, you are a pigmy, but your faith is very vast, cosmic, pure and great. However, you are misusing that faith and belief in your worldly life. Why are you misusing it? Because of hatred, jealousy, love, affection, attachment, lust and greed. These are misappropriations of your inherent energy, which nature has given to you in the form of faith and belief.

So, the easiest method I have found is bhakti, devotion to God. Live the life as you want, but with the awareness that He is operating through you and every action is His inspiration. Every accomplishment is God's grace and every loss, every pain is God's teaching. Death is not painful, it is not God's curse. Death is a teaching, so too are disease, separation, pain, disappointment and frustration. The rest you know: where is kundalini, where is the light and how to awaken it? Therefore, you should try to awaken your *shraddha*, your faith. In this regard it has been said in the *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Devoid of faith, bhakti is not possible,
Nor does Lord Rama give His blessings.
Without the grace of Lord Rama,
No living being can find peace, even in dream.*

Swamiji, we have come for your blessings. Will we receive them?

You have got into the habit of asking for blessings, just as Bholenath is in the habit of licking my ear all the time. Only God can give blessings. Gurus are only the postmen. I am and always was a postman. It would be better if you could kindly deliver your own letter there, because I have left that work now. I prayed for so many people with all my heart, but what happened? People misused it. Just looking after the family is not the dharma of a human being. What did you give to society? What was your contribution towards the welfare of this world?

You produced one child and worked to make him an engineer, and another a collector. Did you ever realize that the foundation of society is based on people who are great and pure? Did you ever think of producing such a son? Never. Those sons who opted for sannyasa were discouraged. They were questioned as to why they were adopting the life of a sannyasin when God could be realized even as a householder. King Janaka realized God as a householder and Lord Rama was himself a householder.

Those of you who are in the forty to eighty year age group have seen this century. On the one hand, people have claimed that we are progressing, and on the other hand, we have realized that we are regressing. What is actually happening? Progress or regression? Everyone says that it is regression. Why? Because the basis of progress is the internal culture of humanity, and that culture has been destroyed. The twentieth century belonged to the politicians and materialistic scientists. It was not the century of a spiritually oriented people or culture. We saw and were shown the importance of politicians and scientists during this century.

Now, at the end of the century, we have realized that they have given us absolutely nothing. They did not help the poor. There is no denying the fact that they have not been able to remove poverty. But in the next century their hold on society will be reduced and people will be motivated more and more towards bhakti. Even scientists will cooperate in that process. Scientists will help because they have realized that whatever research they have carried out has been misused for the destruction of humanity.

Can you tell us something about the existence not only of this universe but of the many universes, of different planets and places of the earth, and of the human race in this cosmic creation?

I can't say much although, of course, I have thought a lot about it. It is a very difficult subject because first of all, the universe is infinite. There is no end. You cannot say this is the end or this is the beginning of the universe. Any concept of endlessness is mind-boggling. How can you think about it? What is this concept of endlessness? I can use the word endless in relation to time or eternity, or in terms of space or infinity. I can use these words, but when I think about them, I do not understand them. What is infinity and what is eternity? How can there be something which has no beginning and no end? I have never thought of something without a beginning or end. There has to be a beginning and there has to be an end. If there is no end and no beginning, then what is there? Only a circle has no beginning and no end.

What do you think about God having his own God?

These are the transcendental questions which I posed to myself for many years. Ultimately, when I was mentally and intellectually exhausted and had nothing more to say, then I approached Him, not through the intellect but through my feelings. Perhaps He will give me an answer, but then the answer is only for me and not for anybody else. I can understand it but I cannot convey it.

Similarly, the Vedic system in India has many books about the universe or universes. They talk about different planes of existence: *Deva loka*, the plane of the gods, *Varuna loka*, the plane of Varuna, and *Vayu loka*, the plane of Vayu. They say there are infinite planes of existence. There are stories about where the *devas*, divine beings, live, and what kind of people they are, how they move, and what their activities are. Where do Indra, Vishnu, Shiva, Lakshmi, Saraswati and Brahma live? What does Saraswati look like? How beautiful is she? Who are Lakshmi and Saraswati? Do you know Saraswati? The Greeks know her as Athena. So, there are various other planes and they are very far away. You cannot go there physically. You can go there only through your mental body.

There is a great sannyasin who goes to all these planes, just like sending fax messages. His name is Narada and he is very famous. A lot of people know of him. He always carries a *veena*, a stringed instrument, and sings: ‘Narayana, Narayana, Narayana’. Narada goes from Indra loka to Brahma loka, from Brahma loka to Vishnu loka, from this plane to that plane, from that plane to another plane. He just keeps on going. He also came to earth many times. He is considered to be the greatest devotee of Lord Narayana. He was a sannyasin and he did not marry, but once he thought about marrying a girl, Vishwamohini, whom his mother wanted him to marry. Finally, he found out that she was only an illusion created by Lord Vishnu, who had taken the form of Vishwamohini, and Narada was cheated. So, in this way, there are various planes of existence that are spoken about in the Vedic texts. They also say that the great rishis, those with higher spiritual powers, were able to communicate with these subtle planes of existence.

What is the relationship between ‘Vedo aham’ and ‘Urdhvamoolamadhahshakham’ from the *Bhagavad Gita*? It is believed that we ourselves are the Vedas.

The fifteenth chapter of the Gita is known as *Purushottam Yoga*, the yoga of the supreme spirit. The first verse states:

“The wise speak of the indestructible peepal tree, having its roots above and branches below. Its leaves are the metres or hymns. He who knows it is a knower of the Vedas.” This verse describes the kundalini shakti, with its sushumna nadi and the various chakras from mooladhara to sahasrara in your body. You are also an inverted tree. The roots of this tree are over the head, which is sahasrara. From there the stem comes straight down sushumna, from which several thousand branches emanate. These represent the various nadis, said to be seventy-two thousand in number. The branches of the tree are turned upside down and the roots are at the top. This is the ‘urdhvamoolamadhahshakham’ referred to in your question. This is the kundalini tree.

The first four verses of this chapter mention this kundalini tree. Now, the word Veda does not mean only the four Vedas. In Sanskrit, the word Veda comes from the root *vid*, which means ‘to know’; and *Yastam veda sa vedavit* means ‘one who knows him, knows everything’. *Vedavit* means the ‘knower’. A person who is called a knower in English is called vedavit in Sanskrit. Words like vidya, vidvan, etc., are derived from the same root. Kabir has also expressed the same view. All the saints and sages also say the same thing. As far as Vedoham, Shivoham etc., are concerned, there is no discrepancy.

Would you tell us something about rebirth?

What is the use of knowing about rebirth? No one can tell you anything definite about rebirth. Nachiketa asked the same question of Yama, the god of death, but Yama asked Nachiketa to ask him any other question except this one. Then Nachiketa asked about panchagni vidya, and Yama explained it to him. Nachiketa requested the boon from Yama that he would be accepted back by his father, and that was also granted. But this particular question on death and rebirth was not answered. In the entire *Kathopanishad* it is not explained. In *Satapatha Brahmana* there is a story which mentions that Nachiketa asked Yama for three boons. Yama

granted two boons, one pertaining to panchagni vidya and the other pertaining to his acceptance by his father. The third question, which you too have asked, was not answered. Yama told Nachiketa:

*Even the gods in ancient times doubted this point,
Which is very subtle and difficult to understand.
Do not press me for this boon, O Nachiketa.
Choose another and release me from that obligation.*

The two questions which Nachiketa asked Yama were as follows:

*Seeing you, having your darshan,
Who can enjoy wealth or long life?
I shall live while you reign,
So I have no boon to ask of you,
Except the knowledge of the Self.*

And,

*O Death,
Tell me about that which people doubt
Regarding the supreme life after death.
Only that boundless boon does Nachiketa crave.*

Don't all the scholars claim that rebirth is a reality?

Nothing is destroyed in this world. Only the form is destroyed, matter is not. This is certain. For example, take the case of a golden bangle. If you melt the bangle and make another ornament out of it, you have just changed the form, but not the gold. You only destroy the form; the basic matter is indestructible.

Similarly, when a person dies, the body is burnt, but its essence, which we call the soul or spirit, remains. Something happens to this essence: it goes somewhere, it must assume some form or shape. Therefore, the phenomenon of rebirth is an acceptable hypothesis. As to what happens and how it happens, even our Vedic culture has different branches and

each one has something different to say on this subject. But we believe that the spirit can be reborn thirteen days after leaving the previous body, not before that. It is not necessary, however, for it to be reborn on the fourteenth day; it may take years.

I will tell you something else. The concept of time is different in different planes of consciousness: in sleep, in wakefulness, in dream, in unconsciousness and after death. What is one year in the waking state could be one moment on another plane. What is fifty years in the waking state could be fifty seconds on another plane. Therefore, you should also understand the concept of time in different stages of existence. What is one hour for you in the waking state is just half a second in dream, if that. In half a second of dream, you can experience seven lives. This is described in the *Yoga Vasishtha*. The king was telling the queen a story. The queen dozed and dreamed that she was married, had children, became old, and died. She was reborn, grew up, married, had children, became old and died. She was born again seven times. When she opened her eyes, her husband had not finished one sentence.

So you have to understand the mysteries of time in relation to the mind. You cannot say that one year for you is one year for the devas. Your one year is not one year of Brahma; your one year is not one year of the sun. You do not know what one day is for the sun. For you, one year is three hundred and sixty-five days because the earth revolves once around the sun in that period. But this sun may also be revolving around some other planet, which might take fifty years according to your time scale. So your fifty years and the sun's one year would be the same!

Therefore, first of all, understand the question of time in relation to matter and space. As such, the soul who leaves the body and is not reborn within thirteen days remains on some plane which is in-between. Only after thirteen days is rebirth or reconception possible. However, these thirteen days for the soul or spirit which has departed from the body may be many hundreds of years of our conscious state or they may

be just a few seconds. We don't know what the measurement of time is for a spirit. What is the measurement of mental time? What is the measurement of dream time? What is the measurement of physical time? If you understand that, then you can understand what happens to the spirit after it leaves the body.

Once the spirit leaves the body, it is no longer in the physical space. It enters another space, which has its own measurements, laws, gravity, science and system. Perhaps you think that the spirit which has departed from the body is subject to and follows the rules and regulations of this plane, but this is not so. The laws of the waking state, the dream state, unconsciousness, deep meditation and nirvikalpa samadhi are entirely different from one another. The laws of time, space and gravity all differ. The subject of rebirth is a very difficult one. If it were easy, then everybody would remember his past life, but no one remembers it. Even if you remember a little of your past life, God makes you forget that eventually.

It is essential for us to forget our past, because we tend to remain unhappy and sad due to the tragic things that occurred only ten or twenty years ago. This happens because we still identify ourselves with those occurrences. What would you do if you found out that five hundred years ago, before his sixth or seventh birth, the sadhu who is sitting in front of you and preaching had murdered your wife or misbehaved with her? So believe me, it is God's grace that we do not remember our past lives. Had we been able to remember our past lives, we would have landed in a mental asylum. We are not able to bear the unhappiness and tragedies even of this birth, so forget about rebirth. Pay attention to the present birth; it is more pragmatic. To think about another life, a previous life, is not practical.

How can we prevent ourselves from identifying with an unhappy event that took place twenty years ago?

There is no technique for it. Even Kabir Das, Guru Nanak, Tulsidas and other saints, sages and great souls have been

telling us time and again to forget about the past. Even my guru has said a very nice thing about it. You always remember the past because it is a mental weakness of human beings. No one has ever known the technique of how to get rid of this tendency. Even saints and great souls are not able to forget their past; they are reminded of their childhood from time to time. The happy and unhappy events of their childhood affect their minds as well. Now, what is to be done about that? Well, I do not know.

We are not able to meet you, so whom should we approach or consult regarding our future sadhana?

A disciple always wants to progress like a school student. He goes from the fifth to the sixth and from the sixth to the seventh standard, and so on. But you do not want to progress; you wish to remain in the same class. In order to go to a higher class, you have to leave behind the old books and take up new ones to start the new course. You are not in a position to discard the old books, so how can you start off in a new course? The spiritual rules for a householder are different to those for a sannyasin. Spiritual rules also differ according to every situation; in the outside world and in the ashram they are never the same.

Grihastha ashrama is an ashram and a sadhana by itself. But people have misunderstood its meaning. They consider it to be a licensed place for sensual pleasure. They feel that they can consume alcohol and do whatever they like. However, grihastha ashrama is a training ground for spiritual life where recognized internal and external sadhanas are undertaken. Here one must learn tolerance. Is it not a good quality? Here one learns to serve others even at one's own cost. To cultivate this positive quality is also a sadhana. These are just examples.

In the Vedic tradition our ancestors have given the status of ashram to grihastha ashrama. The word 'ashram' means a place where an aspirant works hard. Grihastha ashrama means a place where a householder works hard and the same

holds true for a brahmachari in brahmacharya ashrama, a vanaprasthi in vanaprastha ashrama, and a sannyasin in sannyasa ashrama.

There are four types of purusharthas, or endeavours: *dharma*, duty, *artha*, wealth, *kama*, desire, and *moksha*, liberation. For a grihastha, three are important: dharma, artha and kama. For a vanaprastha, there are two: dharma and moksha. A sannyasin has only one text book, moksha, to learn, but a householder has a very large syllabus: dharma, artha and kama. You have to learn various aspects of these three subjects in your life. Singing bhajans, doing spiritual sadhana, japa, meditation, kirtan, asana and pranayama are part of your dharma purushartha, not that of moksha purushartha.

Why? Because your mind should be steady and balanced to perform dharma. If your mind is upset and imbalanced, then you cannot cultivate qualities like forgiveness, compassion, mercy, tolerance and fearlessness. You should have tolerance, fearlessness and a feeling of sacrifice. Then with the help of dharma, you can achieve a balanced mind. From dharma, you further proceed to achieve artha and kama. In the *Ramacharitamanas* the Lord talks about the chariot of dharma:

*Listen, O friend, said the treasure of mercy,
The chariot which leads to victory is of a different make.
Valour and fortitude are the wheels of that chariot,
Truth and virtuous conduct are its flags and banners,
Strength, discretion, self-control and kindness its horses,
Harnessed with forgiveness, compassion and equality.
The bhajan of the Lord is the skilled charioteer;
Dispassion is his shield and contentment his sword;
Charity is his axe and intelligence his fierce lance,
Supreme wisdom is his bow, a peaceful mind his quiver
Containing the arrows of quietude, restraint and order.
Homage to Brahman and Guru are his buckler,
There is no other way to ensure victory than this.*

*O my friend, one who rides upon such a chariot
Of righteousness has no enemy to conquer anywhere.*

If you do not follow dharma on the way to artha and kama, then artha and kama will always lead you to the path of adharma. Is it not so? Artha means the same everywhere, acquiring wealth, and kama means desire. There are three kinds of desire in this world: for a woman, wealth and children. These three desires or wishes are in everybody. Nobody is free from them. A few people, not everyone, have an additional desire for fame and power. How are you going to strike a balance between these three desires which are inborn in all human beings?

This subject has to be given due consideration by the householders in grihastha ashrama. You are likely to fall if you do not apply a brake on the artha and kama aspects. This could destroy your entire energy. When you are properly balanced within, on account of the presence of dharma, then you will be in a position to implement the artha and kama aspects in your life. This is the syllabus for grihastha ashrama spiritual life. If you are keen to know what happens in kundalini yoga, nada yoga or any other higher yogas, then you need to leave the house and practise rigorously for two to four years at one place. These yogas cannot be practised otherwise. My guru always stressed the fact that these yogas could not be undertaken while one is living at home.

Can we achieve the result of sadhana if we practise japa regularly with one mantra?

Everything is possible for a person who has faith, but there is no way out for a person who has doubt in his mind. Questions do not arise in the mind of a person who has faith. A person with faith has a very strong conviction. A faithless person has no way out. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (4:39–40) the Lord says: “The man who is full of faith, who is devoted to it, and who has subdued the senses, obtains knowledge.

And having obtained the knowledge, he at once obtains supreme peace. The ignorant, faithless, doubting self goes to destruction. Neither in this world nor in the other, is there happiness for the doubting.”

I want to follow the spiritual path but I don't have a guru. Can you advise me where to begin?

You should follow the spiritual path after ascertaining it from your guru. If you are interested in this path, then you will have to search for a guru. Go to a guru, sit down at his feet, and try to understand his teachings. If you are able to follow his teachings, then seek his guidance. The path shown by the guru is your path, if you have faith. Then you need not go here and there with your queries, because everyone will answer your questions from his own point of view, and then your mind will be a mixture of so many views. It is better to catch hold of one person only and keep your clarity of mind. You should have one guru. If you follow one guru, you will have clarity of mind. Otherwise, you will get confused by the views of different people and then you will not be able to realize what is true and what is false. This path which I am describing belongs to the guru-disciple tradition.

Do you think that matter has a memory, and if so do you think this memory is inside us?

Yes, matter has memory and it has been proved. Therefore, it has all the possibilities of existence in time and space.

What is panchagni sadhana and will you complete it? How is its outcome going to be utilized for the welfare of society?

I am not doing anything for the welfare of society. I am not a socialist. What is the welfare of society, after all? Everyone has to go through his karmas. You are talking about the welfare of the society but what are you doing about it? Nothing. In the *Srimad Bhagavata*, Brihaspati says to Janmejaya:

*O King, many people die due to snake bite, dacoits,
Fire, lightning, or from hunger, thirst and disease,
But, in fact, they reap the consequences of their karmas.*

I have come here to live in seclusion. I am a paramahamsa. I belong to the paramahamsa order. Panchagni is a sadhana of our life. We sit in front of the fire. Our gurus used to smoke a chillum, but I am not in that habit. I sit alone, light the fire and that is panchagni. What does panchagni mean? We have five fires inside our body, in the form of desire, anger, greed, attachment and ego. Everyone here is doing panchagni tapasya. All the people sitting over here are panchagni tapasvis. Aren't all the five fires of desire, anger, greed, attachment and ego burning inside them? Everyone is dehydrated psychologically as well as emotionally.

Don't saints and great souls utilize their achievements for the welfare of society?

Yes, but I am neither a saint nor a great soul. That is one point. The other point is that I do not go after achievements. What shall I gain by going after them? What achievements? Wealth, honour or glory? These are not achievements; they are mere mirages. The more wealth you earn, the more you yearn for. You seek more honour than you receive. You want more money than you have, and one day you die. It is like the stag which runs after the mirage of water from place to place and ultimately dies of thirst. So, I do not desire achievement or anything else. I have come here to remain in seclusion. I will continue to stay here peacefully and that is all. This is the only aim of my life now. In the *Yoga Vasishtha* it has been said:

*Even if one's knowledge equals Mount Meru,
Or he be valiant and of peaceful mind,
Still avarice, even single-handed,
Conquers him and reduces him to dust.*

How can we remain balanced while facing practical difficulties in our lives?

Every season has its own effect. You have to take off your sweater when summer is approaching. As winter approaches, you have to wear it again. When the rains come, your shoes get wet. Similarly, each age has its own characteristics. This century about which you are complaining will pass off in its present form or state. However hard you may try, you and I cannot change society. It will go on like that for a few more years. We need the dawning of a new century to usher in a new era of changed thinking in our life. This has happened in every century. The last century belonged to technology and political culture. It was a century of political upheavals and scientific achievements.

Now, towards the end of the present century, many people have started thinking about what we have received from the political culture and scientific achievements of the twentieth century. They question what we have gained and what we have lost. We have the reply to the question about what we have provided ourselves with. What we have lost, we witness in our homes and neighbourhoods every day. Probably no one is prepared to accept this, but people are not going to change, even if they accept the facts of life. You will have to wait for the next two generations.

You must remember that the influence and flow of history is not in the hands of human beings; it is in the hands of time. When time changes, your children, your family and your neighbourhood will change. You remove your sweater automatically when summer comes, without anyone telling you. This culture should change and it is going to change very soon. The materialistic approach prevailing at present is going to last only a few more years. Why? Because guidance for political, cultural, scientific and materialistic achievements was provided to you by Western culture only. Tomorrow the same Western culture is going to ask you to sing the Lord's name, to follow the rules prescribed in the

Vedic culture, to change your dress code, and to set your marriage system right.

It has been India's misfortune that it has always copied others. I have heard with my own ears some people discouraging others from following the path of yoga. They had a misconception about yoga. They thought that a person adopting yoga would become a sannyasin or a renunciate. Today people are spending one or two thousand rupees to learn the practices of yoga in a class. You should know that people are paying a lot to each yoga teacher from Munger. Some people are changing their views because foreigners are adopting yoga. In India, we suffer from an inferiority complex. We think that because foreigners are practising yoga, meditation and kirtan, we should also do so. We are good at copying others.

Anyway, it is good that we are following someone who is on the right track. There can be no objection to that. But since you have asked me how it will happen and what will happen, I am telling you. You need not worry about that. Time changes by itself; no one changes time. Time has its own flow; it goes on by itself. There is always an action and a reaction. After summer, the rains come and after the rains, winter sets in. Like a change in the seasons, there is always a change in time. Similarly, social and political changes take place with time, and there is also a change in the qualities and feelings of human nature. This always happens in the span of half a century or one or two centuries.

Is it proper to compare this political cycle with the seasonal cycle? Haven't the men of an age been seen changing the dharma of that particular age?

The changes in a particular age take place anyhow, but somehow the man of the age emerges on the scene. Time is changing, but people think that it is due to me, whereas I am just sitting here. Time changes according to changed viewpoints in society. Such lines of thinking, views and trends take shape in society itself. Such trends are not like

reactions. That is a process of acceptance and rejection. Social acceptance and rejection bring in corresponding actions and reactions for building a new society and culture.

People like Swami Vivekananda, Swami Satyananda and Rabindranath Tagore emerge in between and are regarded as epoch-making personalities of that particular period. But in fact it is not like that. Time will change even in our absence. Time will change even if you do not wish it to. Despite eating to your satisfaction, you feel hungry again after five or six hours. You eat, defecate, eat again and sleep. Such cycles in life, society and civilization go on all by themselves. You and I need not worry.

What is your view on morality?

Morality is the flow of a particular age; it comes and goes by itself. A person becomes good or bad all by himself. A spoiled person becomes good and gets spoiled again. You feel satisfied after taking food and after some time you feel hungry again. It is a cycle. Let it go on.

How can we give the right direction to our life?

For that it is essential to do penance, sadhana, satsang, self-study and introspection. You have seen life, you have seen everything. There is nothing else to be seen.

I want to learn Sanskrit. Can you guide me?

I do not consider Sanskrit to be a language for communication in the outer field. I consider it to be a language of mantras having their geometrical forms somewhere in space. It is not a language. Therefore, you do not need anyone's guidance. I always say, if life is a risk or a gamble, take it. Those who cannot take a risk or a gamble, can never reach the top. Kabir Das has said:

*It is difficult to be known as a sadhu,
It is like climbing up a tall tree or date palm.*

*If successful, one enjoys the taste of love,
But if one falls down, one is gone.*

Either meet God or perish. Either you reach God or you fall down and are destroyed. There is no middle path in the lives of great people. They do not seek the middle path.

*Better to flash for a moment,
Than to emit smoke for ever.*

However, you should learn Sanskrit thoroughly because later on you will be required to study the mantra shastras. The spiritual consciousness can be awakened through mantra to a very great extent. It is said that when Vishwamitra did intense tapasya, finally the mantra of Gayatri was revealed to him. Therefore, in the Vedas, Vishwamitra is the rishi of Gayatri mantra – *Vishwamitra rishi Gayatri chhanda*.

We have to believe in the spiritual frequency of the mantra. We have also to believe that invisible waves travel in space, through space, from space to space, from object to object. It is happening, it does not need to be proved. If a song is sung in Delhi, you will be able to hear it in Deoghar. If a song is sung somewhere in New York, you will hear it here. This means the sound waves are travelling through space. What is travelling is not visible or perceptible. Of course, they exist; they are not non-existent. Similarly through the help of certain practices, you can awaken the mantra vibrations.

My son wants to take sannyasa, but I feel this is not right, as he has a duty to fulfil to his family and to society. How shall I deal with this situation?

I helped many people, prayed for divine blessings for them, wished them well. Many were blessed with sons, but they dragged their feet on the subject of making their sons sannyasins. Only one person, Swami Dharmashakti, had offered her son, Swami Niranjan, to me and that too perhaps unwillingly. The scripture says:

*The family line is sanctified, the mother is fulfilled,
And the earth is saturated with virtue,
By such a son whose soul is merged in Brahman,
Abandoning the wealth and comforts of this world-ocean.*

In the *Narada Bhakti Sutras* it has been said:

*By the birth of a bhakta, the forefathers become pleased,
The gods dance with joy and the earth celebrates a patron.*

In the *Ramacharitamanas* it also says:

*Only that lady whose son is a devotee of Lord Rama
Can claim to be blessed with a son.*

That is why I am telling you not to grieve. Let your son adopt the path of a sannyasin. An unsuccessful sannyasin is still better than a successful householder because he is a volunteer. Sannyasins are social servants because they are their own servants. A true sannyasin is a volunteer of mankind. For him who voluntarily takes upon himself a duty, there are no rights. For him duty is the right. You always see duty and right separately, my right and duty. But a sannyasin does not separate them. He says duty is his right. I am saying nothing new. In the second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:47), the Lord says: "Your right is to work only, but never to its fruits; let not the fruits of action be your motive, nor let your attachment be to inaction."

Your rights are inherent in your duty. Therefore, do not struggle for your rights. Sannyasins have no social rights. We do not agitate for rights. There may be sannyasins who are doing it, but the dharma of a sannyasin does not allow that. Duty involves your rights. Your rights are inherent in your duties. A sannyasin has to dedicate his life voluntarily, not for a career as many sannyasins have been doing in the last part of this unfortunate twentieth century. Sannyasins do not live for a career or for an occupation. They come out of society with an aim, which is not a sectarian or a partial aim. Sannyasins believe in one universal dharma, in one

humanity, mankind, and in one creation, the creation of God. We do not believe that God has any one name, but that all names are His names. We do not believe that God has any one form, but that every form is His form.

Tomorrow is the anniversary of Dattatreya. Would you please tell us something about him?

Tomorrow is the full moon night of Marga Sheersha and our one month long satsang will end. Thereafter it depends on God. Tomorrow is also a great festival, the anniversary of Dattatreya. In North India people do not know as much about Dattatreya as in South India. Dattatreya's mother was Anusuiya and his father was Atri. Anasuiya was a chaste and virtuous lady and Atri was a man of extremely immoral character. Their natures were opposite. Atri used to go to prostitutes every night. When he could not walk due to disease and pain in his legs and knees, Anusuiya used to carry him on her shoulders to the brothel every night and bring him back every morning. This is a very long story so I am telling it to you in brief.

In Indian philosophy their son is considered to be an incarnation of all the three gods: Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha. There is a song about Dattatreya:

*O Dattatreya, O Avadhoot, be kind to us,
You who are the son of Atri and Anusuiya,
The protector of the three worlds,
And the embodiment of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh.*

An extract from the *Dattatreya Stotra* composed by Narada reads like this:

*You are Brahma in the beginning,
Vishnu in the middle and Shiva at the end.
I bow down to Dattatreya,
Who embodies the three Gods.
You, whose attitude is full of jnana,
Whose dress is the sky and the earth,*

*I bow down to Dattatreya,
Knower of the deepest knowledge.
I remember Dattatreya, who is an avadhoot,
An ever blissful embodiment of the Almighty,
Epitome of truth and godly behaviour,
Who is an ascetic under the shelter of truth.*

At birth, Dattatreya looked like a well-developed child of three or four years. Right after his birth, he told his mother, "I am leaving home." She told him to at least wear a *langoti*, a loincloth. He said that he did not need one: "I will live just as I have come." He spent his whole life as an avadhoota. He initiated thousands of people. Even while on the move, he would make disciples, give mantra diksha and work for their deliverance, without any discrimination according to religion, caste, sex or conduct. Whenever people asked for his blessings he would oblige. He used to tell everyone: "I am neither the body nor the jiva. I am paramatma." Dattatreya was born long before Shankar-acharya. If you are interested in his life, read the *Avadhoota Gita*, which is a wonderful book on Advaita Vedanta.

When I left Munger, I thought of living at Mount Abu in Rajasthan. The sandals of Dattatreya have been kept there on a peak called Guru Shikkhar where Dattatreya performed ceaseless mantra japa and received mantra siddhi. There he lit the *dhuni*, the celestial fire. At Junagadh, there are the Girnar mountains where Dattatreya did tapasya. The number of his sannyasin disciples increased so much that an akhara was launched, which nowadays is called Juna Akhara. Naga sadhus live in that akhara. If you have visited any of the Kumbha Melas, you will have seen them. They are initiated into sannyasa and live unclothed. They lead extremely austere lives.

Dattatreya had only one principle: make your life austere and refrain from sensuality. Those who are sannyasins, who have renounced their homes and families and live in secluded places in search of God, cannot say that their life

should be comfortable. Sensuality is bound to be generated from a comfortable life; there is no escape from it. Where there is merriment and comfort in life, your mind is bound to become polluted, no matter how good a person you may be, how strong your willpower is, or how pure your thoughts are. Dattatreya, therefore, used to tell his followers to follow the sadhu mahatmas and to lead a hard life, to live under the open sky and to make a fire in order to ward off the cold. In very cold climatic conditions like the Himalayas, he would permit them to smoke the chillum.

Therefore, in the Juna Akhara there are no restrictions on sannyasins regarding the smoking of cigarettes or bidis. No naga sadhu bothers about having a roof over his head. He will just spread his blanket under any tree, dig a pit, light a fire and say, 'Bam Shankar.' Dattatreya prescribed such a life and initiated many sannyasins. Later, it was because of these sannyasins that India remained secure. It is a very tough life. Sadhus who live in cities acquire property and it becomes very painful for them to give that up. But for a sadhu who owns nothing, there is no pain in renunciation. That is why the person who owns nothing is tougher and more resilient. He does not have any affection or attraction for anyone. He simply lives. Pain comes only when one's own house collapses. The following example explains this:

*Whose house do you live in?
In the house of Sethaji.
That house is going to collapse.
Let it collapse. What does it matter?
I will go elsewhere.*

It is said that when Dattatreya put his hand on someone's head, even that of an idiot, then that person instantly acquired the knowledge of the Vedas and the shastras. One day his hand inadvertently touched the head of a milkmaid who used to come to his residence. On her way home, she was taunted by some pandits, "O milkmaid! What do you learn there?" She replied, "I learn Brahmajnana." They

asked, “What is Brahmajnana?” She replied, “It is the same as separating pieces of stone from rice with the help of a winnowing basket. You throw away the stones and keep the rice to use.” The pandits were taken aback by the milkmaid’s reply. She answered all their questions with understanding.

Dattatreya had twenty-four gurus in his life. If you do not know about his life, you should read about it. It was very strange and full of adventure. Once he saw an eagle flying with a piece of meat in its beak. Another eagle snatched the piece of meat, and the eagle who had lost the piece of meat was left free. But the other eagles started fighting over that piece of meat. This shows that where there is accumulation, there is insecurity. Where there is no accumulation, nobody cares about you. There are no robberies in a beggar’s house.

In twenty-four different situations, Dattatreya gained knowledge of twenty-four different types of gurus. In our lives also, events which take place in front of our own eyes can teach us various things. It is possible that we can also learn from them, not only Dattatreya. But we do not have that philosophical attention. For example, while sitting in his garden one day, Newton saw an apple fall from a tree. He started thinking about why the apple had fallen down and not up. This insight gave rise to the law of gravity. Apples and mangoes have fallen down many times before. Everyone knows that a stone falls down, fruit falls down, water also falls down, but no one else had thought about why apples fall down. The law of gravity was discovered as a result of a simple incident. This was Newton’s exceptional gift to the world.

Similarly, the incidents that took place in the life of Dattatreya have also been taking place in our lives. However, our attention, alertness, concentration of mind and mental approach is not philosophical. Everything in life should be seen from scientific, philosophical and metaphysical viewpoints, and the reasons behind every incident should

be understood. But no one can be bothered finding out the causes of an incident. Why does a slap give pain? When a mother scolds her child, it gives pain, and when she fondles him, it gives pleasure. When a mother slaps or reprimands her child, he feels bad. Why? Why do we feel affection and hatred? We never ask such questions because our nature is not metaphysical or scientific.

A discerning person tries to understand the reason behind every event and process, and he learns from that. This is what Dattatreya practised. Dattatreya was a great spiritual scientist, like the material or physical scientists of the twentieth century. Dattatreya, Lord Buddha, Lord Mahavira, Adi Shankaracharya and others like them were the scientists of spiritual life. They raised questions pertaining to the realities of life. What is the purpose of this creation? Where did we come from? What is the basis of creation? How do we remain alive and where will we go after death? There are many such questions which seldom come to our minds. We do not ponder about the divine, but Dattatreya did, and he received twenty-four commandments from twenty-four different places.

Such an extraordinary offspring was born of parents having opposite natures. Therefore, if both parents are good, it does not necessarily mean that the offspring will be great. At the same time, if the parents have negative characteristics, it does not mean that the child will be bad. We cannot say also which way the child will turn out when the father is licentious and the mother is chaste. Good and bad characters are so-called as per social observances and customs. You may drink and gamble, but to ascertain your inner nature it is necessary to look into your heart. What is in your heart? Do you feel compassion for others? Do you feel to do good for others? Do you feel happiness and joy for others?

If you are virtuous from within, then the external negativity is only a sheath, a poor man's patched quilt wherein a jewel might perhaps be hidden. The name of Atri's sheath was adultery, but his jewel was something else. That

is why he produced a complete offspring like Dattatreya, who influenced not only his own generation but future generations down through history. Dattatreya propounded the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta long before Adi Shankaracharya, who lived and worked during the period when Buddhism was at its zenith. Dattatreya's Vedantic principles are incorporated in the Upanishads. He declared:

*I am not the body, I am not the creature,
I am not the soul, I am not the matter;
But I am the glowing Atma in which Brahman resides.*

His four pronouncements have been compiled in the *Avadhoota Gita*:

Aham Brahmasmi: I am Brahma.
Shivoham: I am Shiva.
Shivah Kevaloham: I am only Shiva.
Shiva Swaroopoham: I am a form of Shiva.

If you are interested in knowing more about Dattatreya, Atri and Anusuiya, then you will have to read the *Mahabharata*. There you will find their complete story and also details about the unique and dynamic aspects of Dattatreya's personality.

Tomorrow happens to be his birthday. Tomorrow is also the last day of this auspicious month of Marga Sheersha and the door of this akhara will be closed until the next order from the supreme being. Please do not come here after that. The next time God desires and inspires, we will inform you by post, as we did this time. Otherwise, remain at home until I call you. I wish you a happy Christmas and a fruitful New Year.

Satsang 38

17 December 1994

Beginners in Sanskrit have to study the grammar first. Always start with grammar, not with literature. The beauty of Sanskrit is that the grammar unites both idea and language with the mind. But if you do not know the grammar, then you are not uniting what you are saying with your deeper inner recesses. A devotee sings a bhajan:

*O Lord, You are my father and mother,
My helper, master and friend.
You are the support of the supportless,
You succour and protect the whole universe,
You have extreme compassion in Your heart.
We forget You, but You never forget us.
You are the abode of peace, and treasure of love.
You are the light in the temple of the mind.
There is no end to Your benevolence,
Rather You express it from moment to moment.
There are rare wise persons in this world,
Who are able to understand Your great glory.
O Lord, You are the life of my life,
You are the prana of my prana.
Poet Pratap says that, on finding a Lord like You,
To whom else can I go for support?*

Please take your seats then I will tell you what I have to say. I am not here to give guidance to anyone. I stopped giving

guidance in 1983. If you want any academic guidance or classical guidance, go to Munger. If you want divine guidance, you have to approach God directly. Do not make me a middle man, because I am far from you. God is closest to you. A saint has said:

*Rather You alone remain with me,
When there is none to disturb.*

The distance between you and God is much less than the distance between you and me. He is closer than your breath, closer than your mind and closer even than yourself. Maybe you are Himself. If that is the case, why do you seek the blessing of someone who, geographically, physically, mentally and spiritually, is far from you and different from you. Saint Raidas has said:

*There are such experiences which are indescribable,
Who can be separate when the Lord is united?
Hari is in everything and everything is in Hari,
You should know that Hari is your very own.
There is no witness to this; the knower is wise.
He is working within all beings like a magician,
But we do not know the secret of His magic.
The creation is false, but the magician is real;
Only he who knows this can believe in Him.
If the mind is peaceful, no one is visible;
Only a true knower can experience Him from within.
Raidas says clearly that the Lord has decorated
His form well without the least effort.*

Swami Sivananda used to sing:

*Look within.
Within you is the hidden God.
Within you is the immortal soul.
Kill this little 'I',
Die to live,
Lead the Divine Life.*

*Within you is the fountain of joy,
Within you is an ocean of bliss.
Rest peacefully in your own atma.
Drink the nectar of immortality.*

That is a beautiful place where anyone can come to find rest. Jafar has said:

*Why do you ask me the way to meet Him?
If it is your resolve to meet the Lord,
The way is there from all sides.*

Today is a beautiful day, a great day. First, it is the full moon of Marga Sheersha. This is the month of months, according to the *Bhagavad Gita*. Today is the last day of the month and we are meeting for the last time. There will be no more meetings from tomorrow until the next command from Him, no more knocking at the doors, no more telephone calls.

Today is also the anniversary of Lord Dattatreya. He is not called Swami Dattatreya although he was born in a human body; he is called Lord Dattatreya, Bhagawan Dattatreya. He is the guru of all tantrics and the founder of *Aghora Panth*, the path of tantra. This path is not for everyone. It is only for those who have conquered their passions, who have transcended the influence of maya in their lives, who live in this physical body, but do not attach themselves to the things of this world. They live in this world without being affected by maya, illusion. They live like a lotus leaf which grows in water and still remains unaffected by it. Such people can practise the path of tantra and the path of Aghora and realize them.

Aghora means nothing is bad; everything is a way to God. Just as you say 'every road leads to Rome', we say that every road leads to God. The path of Aghora can only be followed when you are completely free from guilt. In spiritual life it is very important that you find a psychological way of union. When you approach Him using

this physical body as a means or an instrument, that is tantra. You can also make psychology the means. However, there is an impasse in Western psychology, in Christianity and in all religions. What is blocking us? In the life of every spiritual aspirant, there is guilt. Everyone is suffering from guilt and this guilt is a great barrier in spiritual life. "I am a sinner! Oh, I have done wrong! I am hopeless! I am not good! I am worthless!"

This kind of guilt not only reflects your inferiority, but also the narrowness of your self-concept. It means you do not understand yourself at all; you really misunderstand yourself. Because of this psychological impasse, modern psychology has its limitations. But where psychology ends, yoga begins, especially the path of Dattatreya Aghora. Is drinking bad? Is eating meat bad? Is marriage bad? Is sexual interaction bad? Is church-going or baptism or taking communion religion? Is religion going to the Vatican or to Varanasi? Do you mean that only good roads lead to God and bad roads do not lead to God? A poet has said:

*O abstainer, allow me to drink wine in the mosque,
Or tell me the place where He is not.*

There are rough roads, good roads, highways, and they all lead to God. There are roads which are full of potholes and bumps, but nevertheless, they are paths. Dattatreya says that wherever you are, whoever you are, whatever your psychological, biological, spiritual, cultural limitations, you must start from that point. If you have to go to Calcutta from Deoghar, how will you go? One way is to go to Jasidih and then to Calcutta. Another way is to go to Jasidih, to Delhi, and then Calcutta. A third way is to go to Jasidih, to Delhi, Bombay, then to Calcutta. Which way do you want to go? The most natural and direct way, of course.

The easiest and most natural way is Jasidih to Calcutta. You can also go to Calcutta from Delhi or Bombay, or any place in India or in the world. But you have to discover what is the most natural way for you to reach God. You

think that it is not possible because you feel guilty about the natural way. You think that it is an ordinary way. No! This whole life is a pilgrimage to God. This is what you are born for. This is your way, your main purpose. You are not born for what you have been doing. The purpose of human birth is God-realization. In the *Srimad Bhagavata* the Lord says:

*The discretion of the discriminating,
And the cleverness of the clever is this:
They obtain Me, who is indestructible and true,
By means of the body, which is perishable and untrue.*

The purpose of human life is to find or realize God. Whatever has to come: children, family, money, wealth, will come. While going to Calcutta, whether you eat nuts or dates or take tea is immaterial, as Calcutta will come. Eating nuts, taking tea, smoking cigarettes or bidis, reading the newspaper or sleeping, are not the goal of the journey, the goal is Calcutta. Similarly, the only goal of our life, for which we are born, is to realize God. In the *Ramacharitamanas*, Tulsidas says:

*The aim of this body
Is to remember the Lord,
Abandoning all desires.*

Whether you are born in the house of a brahmin, a shoemaker or a businessman does not make any difference. Nor does it matter whether you are fat or thin, a noble person, a thief, a dacoit, a gambler or a drunkard. If you have realized why you were born, the goal of your life, it doesn't matter what you do. But if you are ignorant of this goal, then despite being a noble brahmin, you are worthless and your life has no purpose. You may not eat meat, chicken, onions or garlic, you may worship Tulsi and Rama, but if you are ignorant of the goal of your life and the purpose of your birth, then you have achieved nothing. In the *Srimad Bhagavata*, Dattatreya says:

*This human body is an open door for liberation.
Having gained this, if one remains closed
In his house like a bird locked in a cage,
He has fallen from a great height.*

You think you are born to get married, to produce children, to manage the family, to work for payment or to construct a house. No, these things are not the purpose of your life. All that you are actually doing is getting ready for the path which will help you achieve your goal. Peanuts, newspapers, bidis and cigarettes are fine in their own place, so you should definitely not consider yourself bad or useless because you use them. You should also not think that unless you become a good person you cannot pursue spiritual life, or that the divine path is only open to pious people. No, that is just not so at all. The divine path is open to all. Therefore, in the *Ramacharitamanas* the Lord Himself has also stated:

*Even if a man is the enemy of the whole world,
But comes to My refuge although being frightened,
Abandoning pride, delusion and all deceitful acts,
I turn him into a sadhu without delay.*

You are already on the path of God. You took an oath the day your existence began in your mother's womb. That is what you forget. The day you appeared in your mother's womb, you took an oath, "Oh God, take me out of this dark dungeon." After nine months you came out and the worldly air entered your nostrils. From that day you started saying, 'I, I' and forgot to say, 'you, you'. This idea also disappeared from the memory of your parents, brothers, sisters, priests and teachers. Everyone expected you to go to work and earn money. Everyone thinks about many things in household life, things which I do not even know, because I have never even opened a bank account. All of you are account holders, but I am not.

You can do any kind of work. I never speak in favour of doing nothing. I never say to leave your job. I never say not

to marry. I just say not to leave anything, to keep on doing what you have been doing. Live however and wherever you like. However, if you know the goal of your life then your coming here will have been successful and you may not need to come again. I do not have any interest in this world, nor do I have interest in myself. If God-realization is not the purpose of life, then life has no meaning. Life itself is purposeless. I don't see any other purpose for this life. Even if I examine life scientifically, for example, the theory of evolution, I always find that the individual soul or jivatma is trying its level best to reach and merge with the param-atma. Therefore, in *Viveka Chudamani* Shankaracharya says:

*Three things: birth in a human body,
Desire for liberation and a guru,
Are difficult to obtain
Without the grace of the Lord.
Who is more foolish than him,
Who neglects the whole aim of life,
When he is born in the human body?*

Dattatreya gave us the concept of *Aghora Panth*, the path of Aghora, in which nothing is abominable, no pattern of life should be hated, no form of behaviour should be rejected. Don't hate yourself. Throw away completely the complex of guilt which you have about yourself in relation to your life. Whatever I am, my Lord, I am yours. I may be fit for nothing, crooked, wicked, debauched, hopeless, a sinner, a dacoit or a criminal, but whatever I am, my Lord, I am yours. The poet Surdas has said:

*O Lord, good or bad, I am yours,
Protect me from shame and hear my prayer.
Abandoning all, I have come to your refuge,
And am holding your feet with my hands.
By dint of your grace no one speaks against me,
Thus I have become all the more fearless.
Other gods abandoned many destitutes such as I.*

*Surdas said, my Lord, due to your grace,
I have received abundant happiness.*

However, this path is not for everyone. The path of tantra is for the accomplished, those who are free from lust, desire and illusion. It is a very great path. First of all, the devotees and sadhus practise bhakti and attain a high spiritual state. Then they take up tantric sadhana and through tantra they establish control over the tattwas of nature. Maybe you have read about how, in the ashram of Vishwamitra, the seasons behaved according to his wish. Those of you who have not read about it should do so. You will find it in the Puranas and in the lives of saints and sages. The great saint Agastya gave tantric knowledge to Sri Rama on the battle field. After destroying many *rakshasas* or demons, Sri Rama was exhausted and worried because he had to battle with Ravana. We find it referred to in Valmiki's Ramayana:

*Feeling tired in the battle field,
And seeing Ravana before Rama ready to attack,
The gods also came to inquire about his welfare.
Going to Rama, Rishi Agastya told him,
O Rama, listen to that which is hidden and eternal,
By which you will conquer the enemy in battle.
This is called Aditya Hridayam, which is sanctified
And destroys all enemies when remembered daily.
It gives victory and is eternal like Lord Shiva.*

Then Sri Rama performed the sadhana of Aditya Hridayam, which comes in Saurya Tantra.

In our country there are five tantras. However, you should never practise them, because tantric practices are never learned from a male guru. The teacher of tantra is always a devi, a woman. Therefore, do not be misled by any sadhu. I am just telling you the main differences. The first is Shaiva Tantra, the second is Shakta Tantra, the third is Vaishnava Tantra, the fourth is Saurya Tantra and the fifth is Ganapatya Tantra. Two of these five Tantras,

the Saurya Tantra, pertaining to the sun, and Ganapatya Tantra, pertaining to Ganapati, have become extinct and the knowledge has disappeared. Shakta Tantra is now the prominent one.

Both Shaiva Tantra and Vaishnava Tantra became weak because these tantras do not have any sadhana. In Vaishnavism, the bhakti element, surrender to God, which was not seen as a sadhana, became prominent and spread like a wave. As a result, the activities related to tantra gradually became extinct. The other reason was that through the path of tantra, great men, great aspirants, gained control over the elements of nature. However, as a result, the path of tantra became open to everyone, and because many of these people were not qualified, it was abused. Milarepa of Tibet had a lot of animosity for his uncles and cousins and by practising tantra he destroyed them. This can happen.

Nowadays the path of tantra has become completely secret and I am only mentioning it because today is the birth anniversary of Sri Dattatreya, the great teacher of tantra. Dattatreya was an avadhoota. He preached Vedanta and wrote the *Vedanta Gita*. I do not belong to the Juna Akhara of Dattatreya; I am a sannyasin of the Niranjani Akhara. I often make reference to a lady, a tantric yogini, who came into my life in Nainital, when I was eighteen years old. She belonged to the tradition of Dattatreya and I am related to the Juna Akhara only in so far as she belonged to it. I was studying at that time. She was a Nepali, about thirty-seven years old, twenty years my senior.

The story is very long and it is not necessary to tell you all of it. I learned tantric practices directly from her, but I did not teach them to anyone because I do not have the authority to teach them. I am also afraid to do so because people's minds are subject to hostility, animosity, jealousy and so on. I met her in 1942 or 1943 and brought her to my village. She stayed there for about six months and taught me everything. My first meeting with her was a strange incident. One day I was on my way to Nainital. She was sitting at

Pakha Devi and called me over. I have never obeyed the commands of others, until now. Even my guru never gave me orders. I am used to giving orders, not to receiving them.

I looked at her and was about to say, "Am I your father's servant?" but for some reason I was fascinated and went over to her. She asked me to fetch some milk from the market and gave me a lota. I felt like shouting at her. However, she was roping me in, entrapping me. She was a ferocious person like me, who never hesitated to call out insults and give abuse. I used to say anything I liked as a boy. I came from a well known family and didn't give a damn about anyone. Although I wanted to shout abuse at her, I could not open my mouth. "Did you bring the milk," she asked. "Put it there and sit down," she commanded and I sat down.

She handed me a chillum. I told her that I had never smoked one before. She said, "Try it. You will have to smoke it one day." I held the chillum and smoked a little. It tasted extremely bitter and I gave it back to her. There were three or four disciples sitting by her side. I was astonished to hear her speak about such things as chakras, kundalini, sapta bhumikas and so on, which I had read about in the books of Swami Vivekananda. I used to read such books because of the spiritual atmosphere in my home. The woman was quite illiterate. She was jet black in colour and fatter than a buffalo. Her tongue could not have been more vulgar.

I became as helpless in front of her as if she had tied me up. I went back to her on the second day, the third day, the fourth day. Then one day I asked her to teach me something. She said, "Yes, I will teach you. You are at a good age for learning." Then I consulted my father about this. I was afraid of his reaction because he was an Aryasamaji and had no respect for such things. But he said that it was all right, that I could go ahead and learn at my own risk, so I called her to my village. My family owned about fifteen hundred acres of arable land and we were farmers. That is why I am able to give directions and suggestions to the people of the nearby villages as to what they should and should not do with their land.

We had about one hundred and fifty acres of private forest, so I kept her there in a cave and gave her financial assistance. I practised tantra with her for a period of about six months, about fifty-three sessions. She taught me everything fully, all practice and no theory. The experiences I had at that time are beyond description. I had bright, fully blown, effulgent, spiritual experiences, which are called transcendental experiences, which do not belong to the body, which do not belong to time, and which certainly do not belong to any space. It is mentioned in the Upanishads that during such experiences there is no sense of direction, of self or of others, of life or of death. For me, there was neither void nor fullness. It was a state of total nothingness while, at the same time, experiencing everything. There was no knowledge of time, place or environment. There was no fear of darkness or death. I had the experience of infinity, of the indivisible whole.

She was an Aghora. She used to drink alcohol and smoke chillums throughout the day. She had her meals early in the evening. She also used to eat meat and drink throughout the night. When she rested, she never bothered to cover her body. Generally, no one dared to look in her direction. If someone did, he would have had an instant heart attack. She was that type of Aghora Panthi. She died about ten years ago, somewhere near Uttarkashi. Her name was Sukhman Giri and we have named our property on the other side after her. You know the word sushumna, well, her name was Sukhman Giri and she certainly gave me a rich experience.

Then one day she told me that she was going elsewhere. I asked her to initiate me before leaving. She said that she did not initiate anyone but only gave grace, *anugraha*. The word *anugraha* means shaktipat, which you all know. She called it *anugraha*. “Anugraha is not initiation,” she told me. “I have given you these experiences and now you will have to cultivate them through your own efforts. For initiation you will have to find a guru.” Frankly speaking, I had never thought about sannyasa and there had never been any

thought in my mind about guru until she told me this. So, after she departed, I left my home in order to search for a guru and, after groping around, this blind fellow found his guru in Rishikesh. The rest of the story you already know. My guru showed me the way and I think I am on the right path. Kabir Das has said:

*Let not that guru be forgotten
Who has lit the lamp of jnana.
It was only with the grace of the Lord
That the guru came and met me.*

This came to my mind today and I thought of telling you something about the path of tantra according to Dattatreya Maharaj, so you will know how great it is. This path has cast its shadow on every religion. In Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism and every religion mention of tantra marga can be found somewhere.

For the past one month there have been showers of bliss here, plenty of kirtan every day and too much satsang on every aspect of bhakti, but not on yoga. I have left yoga. If you want to talk about yoga, then go to Munger. Yoga was my previous assignment. Now I am the servant of God. He is my master and the servant has no choice. He has to dance to the tune of the master. This was one subject I have spoken about.

The second subject was finding your relationship with God. My path is *dasya bhakti*, the devotion of a servant to his master. If this is not the path of your choice, then start searching for your own relationship with God. In my opinion, the transaction of love is not possible without establishing a relationship. You have to work out your own relationship. I have made it clear that one should not attempt to establish the relationship of father-in-law or mother-in-law with God.

Now people have started writing letters to me about their relationship with God. A swami has written from London that she has decided she is the daughter of God and God is

her father. I said, “Very good. That is also a relationship.” In a good relationship, the heart loses its separate identity, it becomes totally absorbed in God and does not think about anyone else. The relationship established with God is a psychological union, an emotional union, so that thoughts of anyone else do not enter the mind. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna says: “O Arjuna, I am easily attainable by that yogi who is ever steady, who remembers Me constantly every day and who thinks of none else.”

Every person, every creature, has a definite relationship with God of which he is ignorant. You have a definite relationship with God, but you do not inquire about it. You are not able to find your relationship with God because you have many other relationships. In the *Srimad Bhagavata* it has been said:

*This foolish creature considers the destructive body,
House, fields and wealth of his relatives as eternal.
Due to delusion, in whatever yoni he is born,
He takes delight in them and never becomes detached.*

You think that there is no necessity for God at this moment, that you will ask about Him when the time is right. There are many strings attached to you. When all the strings break, the final one, which is with God, will then come to your rescue.

So, during this one month congregation, to which people from all over the world have come, I have emphasized only one topic: devotion to God. That’s all. It is man’s ultimate purpose, his first purpose, the alpha-omega of life. I have also said that I discovered my relationship with Him after coming here to Rikhia. I am Thy servant; Thy will be done. You made me leave my home, I left. Of course, I did not know that You were making me do it. You sent me in search of a guru, I went. I did not know that You were doing it; I thought I was doing it. When I took sannyasa, I thought I was doing it. I did not know that You were making me do it. Similarly, when I came here to Rikhia, I did not know that You were making me

come. I thought that I wanted to come here, but it was You who brought me, so that I could serve you.

Now, when the shadows of my life are becoming longer, I realize that whatever has happened was Thy will. I am very thankful to You for giving me more than I deserved and more than I expected, although, of course, I did not pray for any of it. Now, at the end of my life, I have realized that I did not do anything on my own. Whatever I did has actually been done only by You. My successes are Yours. To this day, I have never faced failure in my life. My health, my clear mind, my happy life, all these are Yours. Whatever efforts I made were all done by You. You bestowed on me the art of living and also the power of thinking. Today, I accept the fact that although I was an undeserving person earlier, now I have become deserving.

You inspired me to accomplish such incredible works. When I think about them today, it seems like a dream. Because of You, I became like a bulldozer, moving and demolishing roads, not caring for boulders and rocks. I spoke about yoga from country to country all around the world. People would rush like crazy to listen to my spiritual discourses. If Your kind protection had not been available to me, I would have landed in jail by now. In countries where religious conversion of lakhs of people took place due to the lure of money, I had crores of people shave their heads in no time! In spite of this, I received appreciation from their religious preceptors in writing. This cannot be my work. It is beyond the capacity of a human being. When the Almighty desires it, everything happens. The scriptures also say:

*A man gets everything which he contemplates,
There is not the least doubt about that.
Even supreme and incomparable majesty
Is obtained by one who directs his mind to God.*

Whatever has not been given to you by God, you never needed. He did not give you a son because you did not

need one. Whatever God has given you, in response to your prayers, be content with that. If God has given you suffering, it means you needed it. If He has given you comfort, that was also what you needed. Kabir Das has said:

*Let that affluence be dashed,
Which obstructs remembrance,
Blessed is the suffering which forces us
To remember the Name every moment.*

God did not give me a wife because I did not need one. He never gave me a bank account. I have never signed a cheque. I have never counted money with my own hands, but I have stamped hundreds of audit reports. My intention in telling you this is only to make it clear that God did not give me what I did not need. God cleared my path of thorns, stones, pebbles and poisonous snakes; He removed all the problems from my path.

Here in Rikhia He has given me two directions: “Love your neighbours as I have loved you,” and “Help your neighbours as I have helped you.” These are His orders and He will also implement them. I am Your chariot and You are the charioteer. I am a machine and You are the mechanic. I am Your vehicle and You are my driver. I will go where You take me. All is Your desire. Rabindranath Tagore said:

*Whatever is happening is Your wish,
You are desire incarnate.
O Mother, all is done by You,
But people say that they are the doers.
You can confine an elephant in mud,
Yet make a lame man climb the mountain.
To some You offer Brahma-pada,
Yet make others go to hell.
I am an instrument, You are the player.
I am the house, You are the indweller.
I am the chariot, You are the rider.
I will go to the destination as You wish.*

I have heard the voice of God and He said, “Love your neighbours. Help them as I have helped you.” Christ heard it; I also hear it. I am not a second Christ, mind you, not a pontiff nor a teacher. I am a servant of God! Yes, a servant of God.

Glossary

- Aana** – small coin; 1/16th of a rupee
Acharya – spiritual guide or teacher
Adharma – disharmony; wrong actions; not fulfilling one's natural role in life
Aditya Hridayam – Sanskrit stotra in praise of the sun
Adityas – resplendent suns; twelve in number
Advaita Vedanta – non-dualistic philosophy of Shankara
Agastya Muni – eminent Hindu sage
Aghan – ninth month in the Hindu lunar calendar; mid-November to mid-December; also known as Marga Sheersha
Aghora panth – path of Aghora, Shaiva sect in which pursuit of reality transcends conventional morality.
Agni – element of fire
Ahamkara – ego; awareness of existence of 'I'
Ahimsa – absence of violence from within; non-violence
Ajapa japa – continuous, spontaneous repetition of mantra; meditation practice in which mantra is coordinated with breath
Ajna chakra – sixth pranic centre or chakra, situated at the top of the spinal cord; seat of intuition; centre where guru's commands are received
Ajnana – ignorance, especially spiritual
Akhara – traditionally, a place for training sannyasins
Alakh bara – 'invisible boundary', a place of seclusion; the place where paramahansa sannyasins live

Alakh niranjan – uninvolved or stainless
Amara – immortal
Amavasya – fifteenth day of the dark fortnight when there is absolutely no moon in the sky
Anahada nada – unstruck sound; unheard sound
Ananda – everlasting, pure bliss
Anandamaya kosha – sheath or body of bliss; beatitude
Annamaya kosha – sheath or body of matter
Antar atma – innermost core of one's spirit
Anugraha – divine grace
Anurakti – mild attachment
Anushthana – resolve to perform mantra sadhana for a particular period of time with absolute discipline
Apara prakriti – lower nature: earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect and ego; material or empirical nature
Aparadha bhakti – devotion with a sense of guilt
Aradhana – worship with intense reverence
Arjuna – third of the five Pandava brothers; mighty warrior with expert knowledge of weapons
Artha – material need, prosperity; one of the four purusharthas
Artharthi – one who seeks wealth
Asakti – attachment
Ashoka – renowned king of Magadha, in ancient India
Ashram – place of spiritual retreat and inner growth through internal and external labour
Ashrama – stage or period of life, of which there are four according to the ancient Vedic ashrama tradition, viz. brahmacharya, grihastha, vanaprastha and sannyasa
Astanga yoga – Sage Patanjali's eightfold path of yoga
Atma – the Self, beyond mind and body; spirit; soul
Atmabhava – feeling and experiencing the Self in others
Atma nivedan – ninth form of bhakti when even the last vestige of individual identity is dissolved in cosmic awareness
Aum – primordial sound; mantra.
Avadhoota – one who is free from all worldly attachments or mental illusions; sixth order of sannyasa

Avidya – ignorance, illusion
Aviveka – lack of discrimination
Ayodhya – capital of Lord Rama, the hero of the Ramayana; also considered as the creator's eternally shining city
Ayurveda – Vedic system of medical diagnosis and treatment
Bhagavad Gita – Sri Krishna's teachings to his disciple, Arjuna, delivered at the commencement of the battle of Kurukshetra during the great *Mahabharata* war
Bhagavan – God
Bhagavati – feminine gender of Bhagavat; the concept of God as a female, Mother Goddess in her charitable form
Baidyanath Dham – temple precincts of the jyotirlingam at Deoghar, Bihar
Bhairava – epithet of Lord Shiva, signifying the state which is beyond mundane consciousness
Bhajan – devotional song
Bhakta – devotee
Bhakti – intense inner devotion or love; channelling of the intellect, emotions and self towards a higher purpose; literally, divine love
Bhakti marga – path of devotion
Bharat – 'land engulfed in light'; also the name of one of Lord Rama's brothers
Bhartrihari – famous Indian saint; king who became a renunciate and wrote epics on non-attachment
Bhasma – sacred ash worn by Lord Shiva
Bhavana – feeling, emotion; ability to perceive subtle vibrations
Bhavani – feminine of Bhava, meaning Shiva; a name of Parvati
Bigha – land measure; 5/8ths of an acre
Bhiksha – alms
Bhoga – sensual gratification, enjoyment and experience
Bidi – Indian cigarette
Bol Bam – literally, 'Speak the name of Lord Shiva'; mantra used by worshippers at Baidyanath Dham, the jyotirlingam at Deoghar, Bihar
Brahma – God as Creator

Brahmacharya – living in constant awareness of Brahman; self-restraint.

Brahmacharya ashrama – first stage of life to twenty-five years of age, devoted to learning and study

Brahmajnana – knowledge of Brahman

Brahman – absolute reality; ever-expanding, limitless consciousness

Brahmanas – commentaries in Sanskrit on the Vedas; literally, a collection of utterances and discussions by the priests upon the science of yajna

Brahmarishi – rishi of the highest rank who is one with Brahma

Brahmin – literally, ‘one who is one with Brahma’; priest caste; one of the four varnas or divisions of the caste system in India

Brighu Samhita – scripture on Vedic astrology

Buddha – ‘illuminated one’; an enlightened sage who lived in India about 2,500 years ago, after whom Buddhism originated

Buddhi – higher intellect; discrimination

Chanda – metre in Sanskrit verse

Chandala – member of lowest caste in India.

Chapati – flat yeastless bread; roti

Chatak – a bird like a cuckoo, which is said to drink only rain drops

Chaturmas – the four months of the rainy season

Chetana – consciousness

Chhandogya Upanishad – perhaps the oldest Upanishad, part of the Samaveda.

Chhat – sixth day after the dark night of the moon in October-November according to the lunar Hindu calendar; specific day for the worship of Surya, the sun God

Chillum – earthen pipe in which bhang or ganja is smoked

Chitabhoomi – cremation ground; a place where funeral pyres are arranged for burning of the dead

Chitta – individual consciousness; aspect of mind whose functions are memory, thinking, concentration, attention and enquiry

Crore – one hundred lakh; ten million
Daan – gift, philanthropy
Dakshina – gift offered to the guru
Dal – pulse; lentils
Dalia – wheat mixture, like porridge
Darshan – to glimpse; to see; to have an inner vision and blessing of the divine power; term often used in relation to God and divinity
Darshan shastra – scriptures on philosophy
Dasharatha – able emperor of India who ruled as king of Ayodhya; father of Lord Rama
Dasya bhakti – devotion of a servant to his master
Dattatreya – ancient sage, considered to have been an incarnation of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha
Deha buddhi – body consciousness
Dehamukta – one who has attained liberation from the body
Deva – literally, ‘illuminated one’; higher force or power
Devarishi – rishi among the gods
Devi – divine force, manifestation of Shakti; goddess
Dharma – natural role one has to play in life; righteous action; duty; one of the four purusharthas
Dharmashala – charitable lodging house
Dhoti – single piece of unstitched cloth tied at the waist to cover the lower half of the body; traditionally guru coloured for sannyasins
Dhuni – sadhana fireplace
Dhyana – meditation; absorption in the object of meditation
Digambara – literally ‘sky clothed’; naked mendicant usually of Jain religion
Diksha – initiation
Diksha guru – guru who gives initiation
Durga – personification of Shakti in her fearsome aspect
Dwaita – duality
Dwapar yuga – third age or cycle in the Day of Brahma, consisting of 864,000 years
Dwesha – repulsion

Ekadashi – eleventh day of the bright and dark fortnight in a lunar month

Ganesha – elephant headed one-tusked deity; son of Lord Shiva and Parvati; remover of obstacles; symbol of all that is auspicious, wealth, knowledge and attainment.

Ganja – hallucinogenic non-chemical drug made out of the cannabis plant

Garuda – eagle; vehicle of Vishnu

Gayatri mantra – Shakti mantra of twenty-four syllables

Geru – earthen red powder; colour of the robes of sannyasins

Ghee – butter clarified by simmering

Gobar – combustible gas produced from cow dung

Gokul – place where Sri Krishna lived with the gopis and cows

Gopis – milkmaids; devotees of Sri Krishna

Gorakhnath – famous tantric guru and hatha yogi. Disciple of Matsyendranath, founder of the Nath school of hatha yoga, second in line of the eighty-four siddhas.

Gotra – family, race, spiritual lineage.

Grihastha – householder

Grihastha ashrama – second stage of life; householder, married life from twenty-five to fifty years

Guna – quality or attribute of the mind; three in number: *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattwa*

Guru – dispeller of darkness; spiritually enlightened soul, who by the grace of his own *atma* can dispel darkness, ignorance and illusion from the mind of a disciple

Gurubhai – disciples of the same guru

Gurukul – educational system of ancient India where children lived in the guru's ashram and were taught by the guru

Guru mantra – personal mantra given by the guru

Guru seva – service to guru

Guru Shikkhar – cave on the outskirts of Mount Abu in Rajasthan where Dattatreya performed austerities

Guru tattwa – inherent element of guru in an individual

Hamsa – 'swan'; third stage of *sannyasa*

Hanuman – son of Pavan, god of the wind, and Anjana, a female monkey; devotee of Lord Rama; considered to be the embodiment of devotion, strength and heroism

Hari – a name of Vishnu.

Hatha yoga – system of yoga consisting of practices for physical and mental purification

Hiranyagarbha – ‘golden womb’; cosmic subtle body

Ida nadi – major pranic channel which conducts the passive, mental force or manas shakti

Indra – chief of the gods; a divinity of the atmosphere controlling the elements

Indriya – sense organ

Ishk hakiki – divine love

Ishk mizazi – worldly love

Ishta devata – one’s personal deity or symbol of the Supreme

Ishta mantra – mantra of the chosen personal deity

Ishwara – literally, ‘one who rules’; supreme ruler; God

Jagatguru – universal guru; title given to shankaracharyas, spiritual heads of the modern sannyasa tradition

Jainism – sect which originated from Lord Mahavir

Jamun – fruit, like a plum

Janaka – name of a famous king Videha of Mithila, father of Sita

Japa – mantra repetition

Jignasu – aspirant, spiritual seeker; preliminary stage of sannyasa

Jivatma – individual soul

Jivanmukta – a soul who is liberated while living

Jnana – true knowledge; wisdom

Jnanendriyas – five sensory organs: ears, nose, eyes, tongue and skin

Juna Akhara – one of the ten akharas in India; see also akhara

Jyestha – third lunar month in the Hindu calendar.

Jyotirlingam – self-existing oval shaped stone symbolizing Lord Shiva; there are twelve such lingams in India

Jyotish – vedic astrology

Kaala – time

Kaala sadhana – practice to gain control over time

Kabir – religious reformer and saint; a great protagonist of Hindu-Muslim amity, influenced by Sufism

Kaivalyapada – path of liberation

Kali – aspect of maha shakti, which is the destroyer of time and annihilator of the ego

Kali yuga – Kali's age; fourth or present age of the world, which began in 3102 BC, with a duration of 432,000 years. During this cycle man is at the height of technology, decadence and corruption of spiritual values

Kama – emotional need or fulfilment; one of the four purusharthas

Kamakhya – siddhapeetha in Assam

Kamyakarma – action done to attain a particular desire or end

Karana sharira – causal body

Karka Samkranti – summer solstice, 16th July, when the sun enters the sign of Cancer

Karma – action in the manifest and unmanifest dimension; law of cause and effect of three kinds: prarabhda, sanchit, kriyaman

Karmakand – the part of the Vedas that relates to ceremonial acts and sacrificial rules; daily rituals of worship for a householder

Karma yoga – perfection in action; yoga of action; action performed with meditative awareness; yoga of dynamic meditation; yogic path of selfless service

Karmendriyas – five organs of action: hands, feet, tongue, excretory and reproductive organs

Karna Chaura – seat of King Karna

Kartal – musical instrument used in kirtan for keeping time

Kartik Poornima – full moon day of the lunar month of Kartik (October/November)

Kartik Shukla Ekadashi – eleventh day of the bright fortnight during the lunar month of Kartik

Karuna – compassion

Katha – story, discussion

Kathopanishad – a major Upanishad belonging to Taittiriya Brahmana of the Yajurveda

Kenopanishad – Upanishad belonging to the Samaveda.

Kheer – dessert made from milk, rice and aromatic spices

Khichari – dish made from rice, pulse and ghee

Kirtan – repetition of God's name; devotional songs or chanting of mantras with musical accompaniment

Kosha – sheath or body; realm of experience and existence

Krishna, Sri – avatara whose teachings are recorded in the *Bhagavad Gita*; eighth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the cosmic sustainer; darkness

Kriya – action; motion; kundalini yoga practice

Kriyaman karma – present or current actions

Kshatriya – one of the four divisions of the caste system in India; warrior; one who protects others from injury

Kumbha mela – huge festival held every twelve years when the sun is in kumbha rashi, rotating between four sacred locations on the Ganga (Allahabad, Nasik, Varanasi, Haridwar)

Kundalini – vital force or latent energy residing in mooladhara chakra, often referred to as the serpent power

Kundalini yoga – path of yoga which awakens the dormant spiritual force

Kurbani – Muslim ceremony at which a goat is sacrificed

Kutichak – hut dweller; second stage of sannyasa

Kutir – small cottage

Laddoo – Indian sweet; also called modak

Lakh – one hundred thousand

Lakshmi – Goddess of wealth, wife of Vishnu

Langoti – loin cloth

Likhit japa – writing of mantra.

Lila – divine play; cosmic game of consciousness and energy

Lobha – greed

Loka – plane of existence or consciousness

Madhurya bhava – attitude of the lover to the beloved

Mahamaya – divine energy

Mahabharata – epic of ancient India involving the great war between the Pandava and Kaurava princes

Mahatma – great soul

Mahavakyas – the four highest spiritual sayings: i) Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahman); ii) Tattwamasi (Thou are That); iii) Ayamatra Brahma (Self is Brahman); (iv) Prajnanam Brahma (Knowledge is Brahman)

Mahavir – founder of Jain religion

Mahesha – literally, ‘great ruler’; God Shiva

Mahima – greatness

Makar Samkranti – winter solstice, 14th January, when the sun enters the sign of Capricorn

Mala – rosary made from tulsi, sandalwood, rudraksha or crystal, used as an aid in japa and meditation

Manas – rational aspect of mind which creates thought/counter-thought

Manas putra – mind born

Mandala – diagram within a circumference symbolizing the deeper aspects of the psyche

Mandaleshwar – head of an ashram

Mandap – raised platform erected for worship or marriage

Mandir – temple

Mangalasutra – necklace of black pearl given to a bride on her wedding day

Manjira – a kind of cymbal

Manomaya kosha – mental sheath or body

Mantra – subtle sound or combination of sound vibrations used for liberating consciousness from the limitations of mundane awareness

Mantra siddhi – perfection of mantra

Manusmriti – highly respected code of conduct given by the ancient law giver Manu

Marga Sheersha – ninth month of Hindu year, November/December

Maruts – gods of the wind

Matri shakti – feminine energy

Maya – ‘illusion’; partial understanding; wrong notions about self-identity

Mirabai – female saint born in the early sixteenth century in Rajasthan, India; a great devotee of Sri Krishna

Modak – Indian sweet; also called laddoo

Moha – infatuation; state of ignorance

Moksha – liberation from the cycles of birth, death and rebirth; inner freedom; one of the four purusharthas

Mouna – silence

Mridanga – large drum made of clay, used as a musical accompaniment in India

Mrityunjaya – conqueror of death; epithet of Shiva

Mudra – in Indian dance: specific physical positions combined with special bhavas or attitudes. In yoga: psycho-neural gesture which alters and redistributes pranic energy within the mind and body

Muni – one who contemplates or who has conquered the mind

Murti – statue; symbol

Naam samkirtan – group chanting of God’s name

Nachiketa – central figure in the Kathopanishad, to whom Lord Yama imparts the doctrine of immortality of the atman

Nada – psychic or eternal sound

Nadis – psychic nerves; the channels for prana in the astral body

Nagababas – naked sadhus

Naga nath – literally ‘master of the snakes; emanation of Shiva in the form of a serpent

Naimittika karma – action performed on a special event

Namo Narayana – ‘Salutations to you who are a form of Lord Narayana’; used as salutation amongst sannyasins

Nandi – snow white bull, the attendant and favourite vehicle of Lord Shiva

Narada – sage, lawgiver or political philosopher mentioned in the Rigveda, Ramayana and *Mahabharata*

Narayana – name of Vishnu, the sustainer of the universe

Nataraja – Lord Shiva; the cosmic dancer

Nawadha bhakti – nine stages of devotion

Neem – tree, the leaves of which are used for medicinal purposes

Nirakara – formless; unmanifest

Niranjani Akhara – one of the ten akharas; lineage to which Swami Satyananda Saraswati belongs, situated at Mount Abu

Nirbeeja samadhi – final state of samadhi where there is absorption without seed; total dissolution

Nirguna – a form free of all gunas

Nirvikalpa samadhi – state in which the mind ceases to function and only pure consciousness remains

Nirvikara – without fault

Nishkama – selfless, desireless

Nishkama mantra – mantra recited without expectation or specific purpose

Nitya karma – daily unavoidable, obligatory action

Nivritti – renunciation of the external world

Nyasa – renunciation, trust

Nyaya – one of the six darshana or systems of Indian philosophy; logic; recognition of a real spiritual experience by the omniscient mind, that is all-encompassing and all-pervading

Om Namah Shivaya – Shiva mantra; ‘I salute Shiva’

Panchagni sadhana – sadhana of the five fires.

Panchami – fifth day of each fortnight of the lunar month

Pandit – priest; learned scholar

Paneer – cheese made from milk curd

Papad – flat, dried biscuit

Para bhakti – supreme bhakti

Paramahansa – ‘supreme swan’; paramahansa sannyasins devote themselves totally to sadhana, thus approaching the final goal of moksha or self-liberation

Paramatma – universal atma

Parameshwara – supreme being

Paraprakriti – transcendental nature

Paratha – fried roti

Parivrajaka – wandering mendicant
Parvati – consort of Shiva; his first disciple; mahashakti
Pashupati – master of the animals
Patanjali, Sage – rishi who codified the stages of meditation in the system of raja yoga; author of Yoga Sutras
Pavan – God of the wind
Peepal – sacred tree
Peetha – abode; place; seat
Pera – sweet made from milk
Pinda daan – offerings to ancestors.
Pingala nadi – major pranic channel which conducts the dynamic force or prana shakti
Poornima – full moon day or night
Pooja – worship, rite
Prakriti – active principle of the manifest world
Pranamaya kosha – energy sheath or body
Pranayama – yogic breathing technique, breath control and retention which expands the range of vital or pranic energy
Prarabhda karma – unalterable or fixed karma
Prarthana – prayer.
Prasad – favour or grace; food or sweets that have been offered to the supreme at the time of worship; sacred food
Pratishta – installation of a deity
Pratyahara – withdrawal of the mind from the senses
Pravritti – action in the external world
Puranas – ancient texts concerning the earliest mythology of the tantric and vedic traditions
Purashcharana – repetition of mantra, following definite rules
Puri – fried roti
Purusha – pure consciousness
Purusharthas – four areas of human endeavour to be fulfilled: artha, kama, dharma and moksha
Radha – foremost devotee of Sri Krishna
Raga – attraction, attachment
Rajarishi – rishi amongst kshatriyas; the warrior class
Rajas – one of the three gunas representing the dynamic, active state of mind and nature

- Raja yoga** – eightfold path classified by Sage Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras
- Rakshasa** – demon; negative or self-defeating force
- Rama** – heroic and virtuous king, seventh avatara of Vishnu; embodiment of dharma
- Ramacharitamanas** – epic written by Tulsidas, depicting the life of Sri Rama; written in Avadhi, a local dialect
- Ramayana** – epic relating the life of Sri Rama; written by Valmiki, in Sanskrit
- Rasagulla** – sweet made from milk
- Rigveda** – oldest of the four Vedas
- Rishi** – seer of truth; realized sage; one who meditates on the Self
- Roti** – yeastless flat bread made in India; chapati
- Rudras** – forms of Shiva; howling energy
- Sadhaka** – spiritual aspirant
- Sadhana** – spiritual practice done regularly for attainment of inner experience and self-realization
- Sadhu** – spiritual mendicant
- Sahasrara chakra** – abode of superconsciousness; ‘thousand petalled lotus’; highest chakra or psychic centre which symbolizes the threshold between the psychic and spiritual realms, located at the crown of the head
- Sakhya bhava** – attitude of a friend.
- Samadhi** – union with the Divine; culmination of meditation; state of unity with the object of meditation and the universal consciousness
- Samarpan** – balanced dedication; sama: ‘equipoised, harmonized’, arpan: ‘to offer’; surrender
- Samaveda** – Veda primarily of devotion, worship and contemplation
- Samhita** – hymns belonging to the earliest tradition of the Vedas
- Samkhya** – one of the six darshana or systems of Indian philosophy; based on the division of existence into purusha, prakriti and a number of elements
- Samsara** – illusory world; unending circle of birth and death

Samskara – unconscious memories; past mental impressions which set up impulses and trains of thought

Sanatan Dharma – system of eternal values

Sankalpa – resolve; willpower; determination or conviction

Sannyasa – renunciation; dedication; from sam meaning ‘equable’, and nyasa meaning ‘trust’

Sannyasa ashrama – fourth stage of life from seventy-five years onwards; total renunciation

Sannyasin – renunciate; one who has detached himself from worldly affairs and strives to attain self-realization

Samyam – harmonious control, perfection of concentration

Sapta bhumika – seven planes of existence

Saraswati – goddess of learning

Sari – traditional dress of Indian women

Satapatha Brahmana – ‘Brahmana of the hundred paths’; belonging to Yajurveda; most important of the Brahmanas.

Satchidananda – three divine attributes: truth, consciousness, bliss

Satguru – true guru who has attained self-realization; the inner guru

Sati – manifestation of the consort of Lord Shiva; also Indian custom in which the wife burnt herself on the funeral pyre of her husband

Satsang – gathering of spiritually minded people, in which the ideals and principals of truth are discussed; association with the wise

Sattwa – one of the three gunas; pure, unadulterated quality; state of luminosity and harmony

Satya – truth, reality

Satya yuga – also known as Krita yuga; first of the cycles in the Day of Brahma, consisting of 1,728,000 years in which the people born are honest, trustworthy and spiritually minded

Savikalpa samadhi – absorption with seed where the form of awareness remains

Seva – service

Sevak – servant

Shaivism – tradition where Shiva is worshipped as the supreme deity

Shakti – inner creative energy; vital energy force

Shaktipat – transmission of power or energy from guru to disciple; form of initiation in kundalini yoga

Shaktipeetha – place where Shakti is worshipped

Shaligram – spherical smooth piece of stone, symbol of Lord Vishnu, generally found in Nepal.

Shankaracharya – enlightened sage who expounded and spread the Advaita Vedanta philosophy throughout India and founded the Dashnami order of sannyasa; spiritual heads of the modern sannyasa traditions from the lineage

Shastras – scriptures; an authoritative treatise on any subject, particularly science and religion

Shishya – disciple

Shiva – ‘auspicious one’; Lord of the yogis; male principle; represents cosmic consciousness

Shivalingam – black, oval shaped stone symbolizing Lord Shiva

Shivaratri – night of Shiva; also Mahashivaratri; invariably observed on the thirteenth day of the dark half of the Magha, month in the Hindu lunar calendar

Shoonya – void, vacuum, nothingness

Shraaddha – commemorative rites for deceased ancestors

Shraddha – faith, sustained through experience and intuition

Shravan – fifth month of the Hindu lunar calendar; mid-July to mid-August

Shruti – that part of the Vedas in which the disciple is listening and recording directly the instructions of the guru regarding truth and consciousness

Shudra – one of the four divisions of the caste system; labourer

Shvetashvataropanisad – belonging to Black Yajurveda; includes the concepts of Samkhya, theism, identification of the Supreme as Shiva, Shakti and Maya

Shyam – name of Sri Krishna

Siddha – adept or perfected person; one who is able to control the elements and nature

- Siddhateerthas** – holy places which have retained the vibrations of the tapas of great siddhas; awakened shrine
- Siddhi** – psychic power, perfection, accomplishment
- Sindoor** – saffron powder applied on the forehead
- Sloka** – verse
- Sneha bhava** – affectionate feeling like that between brother and sister
- Soham** – mantra of the breath; used in the practice of ajapa japa
- Smriti** – memory; that part of the Vedas recorded as the disciple's remembrance of what has been revealed by the great gurus regarding the truth of inner experience, expansion of awareness and evolution of mind
- Srimad Bhagavata** – book dealing with stories about Sri Krishna
- Sri Panch** – governing body in akhara system; of five persons, representing Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Shakti and Ganesha
- Stotra** – Sanskrit hymn
- Sukhman** – alternate pronunciation of sushumna or sushumna nadi
- Surdas** – blind Indian poet saint of the bhakti movement
- Sushumna nadi** – central nadi in the spine which conducts the kundalini or spiritual force from mooladhara to sahasrara
- Sutra** – thread of thought outlining the ancient spiritual texts
- Svetambaras** – mendicants wearing white clothing, usually of the Jain religion
- Swabhava** – innate nature, personality and limitations
- Swadhyaya** – self-study, self-knowledge, self-awareness
- Swati nakshatra** – constellation of heavenly bodies
- Tamas** – one of the three gunas; state of inertia, dullness or ignorance
- Tandava Nritya** – dance of the destruction of illusion, performed by Lord Shiva, after which he is named Nataraja
- Tantra** – ancient universal science, philosophy and culture which deals with the transcendence of human nature from the present mundane level of evolution and

understanding to transcendental knowledge, experience and awareness; process of expansion of mind and liberation of energy

Tapasvi – one who practises tapasya

Tapasya – austerity; process of burning impurities

Tattwa – essential element; true or real state

Teej – important festival of Rajasthan, celebrated in June/July; presiding deity is Parvati as the bride leaving her parents' home for her husband's home

Teertha – sacred place, pilgrimage

Tika/tilak – red paste used by Indian ladies on the forehead

Treta yuga – second of the cycles in the Day of Brahma, in which man becomes less spiritually inclined and motivated. Period of 1,296,000 years

Tripundra – three horizontal stripes of ash on the forehead denoting a member of the Shaivite tradition

Tulsi – holy basil; sacred herb with medicinal properties

Tulsidas – famous Indian saint who wrote *Ramacharitamanas*

Tyaga – renunciation

Udasin – a stoic, one who is indifferent

Upadesha – instruction; verbal command; guidance

Upanishads – ‘to sit close by and listen’; ancient vedic texts, conveyed by sages, rishis or seers containing their experiences and teachings on the ultimate reality

Upasana – personalized form of worship

Vairagya – dispassion

Vachan – promise

Vaishnavas – tradition in which Vishnu is worshipped as the supreme deity

Vaishya – one of the four varna or divisions of the caste system in India; business man

Vama marga – path following left hand ritual of the tantras

Vanaprastha ashrama – third stage of life from fifty to seventy-five years of age; retirement from worldly life in order to practise sadhana in relative seclusion

Varnashrama – four ashramas or stages of life through which one moves

Varuna – God of water
Vasana – seed or inherent desire
Vasishtha, Sage – guru of Rama
Vasus – celestials; sort of demi-gods, eight in number; always present in light or luminous radiation
Vatsalya bhava – attitude of a parent to a child
Vedanta – ‘end of perceivable knowledge’; one of the six darshanas or systems of the vedic philosophy, which deals with transcendental and manifest nature of consciousness
Vedas – ancient scriptural texts of Sanatan or eternal dharma; revealed texts expressing the knowledge of the whole universe; the four Vedas are: Rig, Yajur, Sama, Arthava
Veera bhava – the feeling one has towards an enemy
Videha mukti – beyond body consciousness
Vidya – knowledge, particularly of spiritual truth or non-mundane reality
Vidya guru – teacher of spiritual truth
Vijnana – intuitive ability of mind; higher understanding
Vijnanamaya kosha – higher mental sheath or body
Vikara – defect, deterioration
Vipassana – Buddhist meditation practice
Virakti – non-attachment
Vishad yoga – yoga of despondency; chapter one of *Bhagavad Gita*
Vishnu – second of the three aspects of divinity; sustainer of the universe
Vishwas – belief, trust
Viveka – discrimination; right knowledge or understanding
Viveka Chudamani – book of instructions on spiritual progress and the way to self-realization, written by Adi Shankaracharya
Vrindavan – place where Sri Krishna performed his lila
Vritti – mental modification
Yajna – any work which is beneficial to one and all; complete ritual of the fire ceremony performed for external and internal purification
Yamaraja – God of death

Yoga – union; from ‘yuj’ to yoke; system of thought and practices leading to a state of union between two opposite poles, i.e., individual and universal awareness

Yoga danda – specially designed rod which yogis rest in the armpit to change the flow of the breath in the nostrils

Yoga Sutras – ancient authoritative text on raja yoga by Sage Patanjali

Yoga Vasishtha – a book containing the teachings which Guru Vasishtha gave to Lord Rama

Yoni – source; place from where creation takes place

Yuga – An age or cycle of earth and mankind, the four being Satya yuga, Treta yuga, Dwapar yuga and Kali yuga.

Index

- Administration 12–13
Ageing 39, 164–165
Aghora 412, 416
Ahimsa 194, 227
Aim in life 220
Ajna chakra 248
Anandmayi Ma 138
Anxiety 20–21, 51–52
Ashram life 352–353
Ashramas 176, 394–395
Astrology 21, 231–232
- Bhajan 150–151
Bhakti 112–114, 156–157,
170–176, 186–187, 201–203,
235–237, 250–253, 287–288,
303–308; developing bhakti
326–331; dasya bhakti 122–
124, 126; Ishwara bhakti 214;
madhurya bhava 119, 210–
214; para bhakti 203–205;
sakti bhakti 218–219
Bhagavad Gita 47, 122, 255, 268
Bhoga 240, 246, 252
Bholenath 25–26, 140, 155,
297, 372–373
Bihar Yoga Bharati 281, 284–285
- Brahmacharya 293–295
Brainwaves 248
Buddha, Lord 208–209
Buddhism 246–247, 254
- Children, disobedience of
242–244; education of 31,
345–349; problems with 159–
164; rearing 1–6, 41–45, 148
Christ 58, 59, 120
Christianity 246, 254–255
Cows, see also Sivananda Math;
donation of 28–29, 142–143;
seva 29; urine therapy 142;
wish-fulfilling 268
Criminal behaviour 224–226
Cultural changes 79, 254,
399–401
- Dattatreya 302, 403–409, 412,
418
Death 18–19, 25–26, 188,
196–197; preparing for 36
Deoghar 37, 137
Depression 21, 317–318
Desire 149–150
Despair 276

- Destiny 192–193, 220, 230–231, 277–278
 Devotion, see Bhakti
 Dharma 16, 38, 253–257, 313;
 Buddhist dharma 246–247;
 Sanatan dharma 194–195;
 Vedic dharma 110, 226,
 246–247, 293
 Direction in life 401
 Drives 79–80, 111, 149–150
 Duty 33

 Education, village children 31
 Ego 9–11
 English language 38–39
 Evolution, of the soul 192–193
 Extraterrestrials 205–208

 Faith, see also Bhakti, 257–258,
 381, 396
 Family system 361; Indian 100
 Fasting 214, 381
 Fear 7
 Future, changes in 339–340;
 expectations for 272; mes-
 sage for 26

 Gandhi 72–73
 Ganesha 300–301
 Genes 258–259, 290; genetic
 transfer 160–161, 224–226
 Giving 33–34
 God, blessings of 17, 20; dar-
 shan of 50–51; duty to 49;
 form of 49–50, 120–121,
 186–187, 373–374; grace of
 288–289; laws of 27, 46; name
 of 311–312; relationship with
 6–7, 56, 114–116, 307–310,
 332–333

 Grihastha ashrama 243–244,
 394–396
 Gunas 218–219
 Guru 131; search for 65–67,
 278–279, 397
 Guru-disciple relationship
 7–8, 9–16, 18–19, 24–25, 70,
 157–159, 197–200, 269–271,
 304–306

 Happiness 21, 215
 Heart 277, 324
 Helping others 27, 73–78,
 321–323
 Honesty 43–44
 Householder life 216–217, 244
 Humanity 26
 Human beings 259

 Ida and pingala 23, 295–296
 Indian dance 23
 Indriyas 259
 Illness 148

 Jyotish, see Astrology, 230–232

 Karma 220–221, 313, 364–367;
 exhausting 111–112, 269–
 270; laws of 46–48; types of
 111, 269
 Khechari mudra 248–249
 Kirtan 129–130, 150–151,
 169–170, 234–236, 247–252,
 368–370
 Koshas 297
 Krishna, Sri 121–122
 Kriya yoga 296
 Kundalini 237–238, 390

 Lakshmi 141–142

- Lokas 389
 Love, see also Bhakti; in marriage 290–291; Ishk-hakiki 362–363
 Lunar cycles 294–295

 Mantra 73, 291–292
 Marriage 224, 272; finding a marriage partner 226; love in 290–291; mixed marriage 227–230
 Martial arts 8–9
 Maya 261
 Meditation 155–156
 Milarepa 304–306
 Mind, management of 27; quietening 356–357
 Mohammed 58, 59
 Morality 401
 Music 150–151, 247–248

 Nadis 295–296, 390
 Needs and wants 24
 Niranjanananda, Swami 198; childhood of 1–2, 45, 217–218; education of 58–59, 163
 Non-attachment, see also Vairagya, 17–19, 209–210

 Opportunities in life 81

 Panchagni 109–110, 155, 397–398
 Parenting, see also Children; discipline 242–244; in the modern world 148, 159–164; spiritual duty 57–59
 Pashupatinath 263
 Politics 35–36; conflicts in 360–362

 Poverty 33; in villages 322–323; self-imposed 216
 Prediction 21, 230–231

 Rebirth 26, 101–104, 188, 191, 197
 Relationships 191–192
 Religion 253–256
 Renunciation 193, 276
 Rikhia 299–300, 377–378

 Sacrifice 7–8
 Sadhana 27–28, 30–31; diet for 267; Indian dance as 23; types of 265–269
 Saints 181–182, 337–338
 Samadhi 239–240
 Samkhya 219
 Sanatan Dharma, see Dharma
 Sankalpa 220–223; child born through 63
 Sannyasa 214, 217–218, 354, 402–403; aim of 240–241; attitude of 72–73; for girls 71; initiation into 65–66; qualities needed in 200–201, 318–322; stages of 106; types of 218
 Sanskrit 38–39, 410; learning 401–402
 Satchidananda 360
 Satyananda, Swami, early life 137–138; paramahansa sadhana 31–32; relationship with God 123–124, 135, 357, 371; relationship with guru 138, 154–155; Rikhia 377–378; Rishikesh 365–366; sannyasa life and mission 69–70, 138–139, 351–354, 355, 370–371; tantric experiences 418–421; travel abroad 355

- Seva 99–100, 367
- Serving others 33, 77–78, 274–275, 321–323, 375–376
- Sexual interaction 294
- Shivalingam 22
- Shankaracharya, Sri 217
- Sivananda Math, Bholenath Readymade Store 140–141; donation of cows 28–30, 142–143, 146–148; helping local people 28, 32, 73–76, 99–100; irrigation and electricity 36–38; requirements of villagers 29–30, 34; treating rural ailments 34–35
- Sivananda, Swami 71, 138, 352–354
- Social conflict 360–362
- Sorrow 21, 215
- Sport 164
- Sukhman Giri 180, 420
- Sushumna 296
- Swabhava 60–63
- Tantra, Aghora 412–413, 416; five different paths of 418; sadhana 291–293, 417; yogini 180, 418–421
- Therapy 82–83; cow's urine 142
- Tulsi 143–144
- Vairagya, see also non-attachment, 209–210
- Vice and virtue 68–69
- Wars 226–227
- Wealth 33, 374–375
- Women, changing customs 254; exercise for 5; social restrictions 5–6
- Yoga, in the future 235–237; in Europe 167–168; in the next generation 224; movement 83–87; research 281–284
- Yoga Vasishtha 209–210

Swami Satyananda was born in Almora (Uttaranchal) in 1923. Drawn to spiritual life from an early age, he left home at the age of eighteen, and in 1943 surrendered himself to Swami Sivananda in Rishikesh who initiated him into Dashnami sannyasa in 1947. He served his guru for twelve years, perfecting every aspect of spiritual life. Thereafter, he travelled throughout the Indian subcontinent as a wandering ascetic.



Realizing the need of the times as scientific rendition of the ancient system of yoga, he founded the International Yoga Fellowship in 1956 and the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963. During the next twenty years, Swami Satyananda hoisted the flag of yoga in every corner of the world, consolidated BSY into a foremost institution of yoga, and authored over eighty major texts on yoga, tantra and spiritual life.

‘Satyananda Yoga’ became a tradition which combines classical knowledge with experiential understanding and a modern outlook. In 1984 he founded the Yoga Research Foundation to synchronize scientific research and yoga, and Sivananda Math to assist the underprivileged. In 1988, at the peak of his achievements, he renounced everything and adopted kshetra sannyasa, living as a paramahansa ascetic. In 1989 Rikhia was revealed to him, where he came to live and performed higher vedic sadhanas in seclusion. Receiving the command to provide for his neighbours in 1991, he allowed the ashram to help the underprivileged villages in the region. From 1995 onwards, he performed a twelve-year Rajasooya Yajna with the sankalpa of peace, plenty and prosperity for all, and in 2007 he announced the establishment of Rikhiapeeth with its mandate to ‘serve, love, give’.

Swami Satyananda attained mahasamadhi, a yogic accomplishment of discarding the body at will to become one with the universal consciousness, in 2009, in the presence of his disciples.



SATYANANDA YOGA
BIHAR YOGA

*"I have discovered my relationship with God
and now my life is an expression of service to Him."*

Bhakti Yoga Sagar Volume 2 includes further inspiring talks and answers to questions given by Swami Satyananda Saraswati in December 1994 when he emerged from seclusion after five years of intensive yogic sadhana. Subjects include his sannyasa life and mission, experiences in Rikhia, aspects of bhakti, discovering one's relationship with God, bhakti as the science of the 21st century, the work of Sivananda Math in the local villages of Rikhia, and many other topics of interest to all spiritual seekers.

Includes 16 colour photographs.



[bar code here]

ISBN :978-81-86336-20-5